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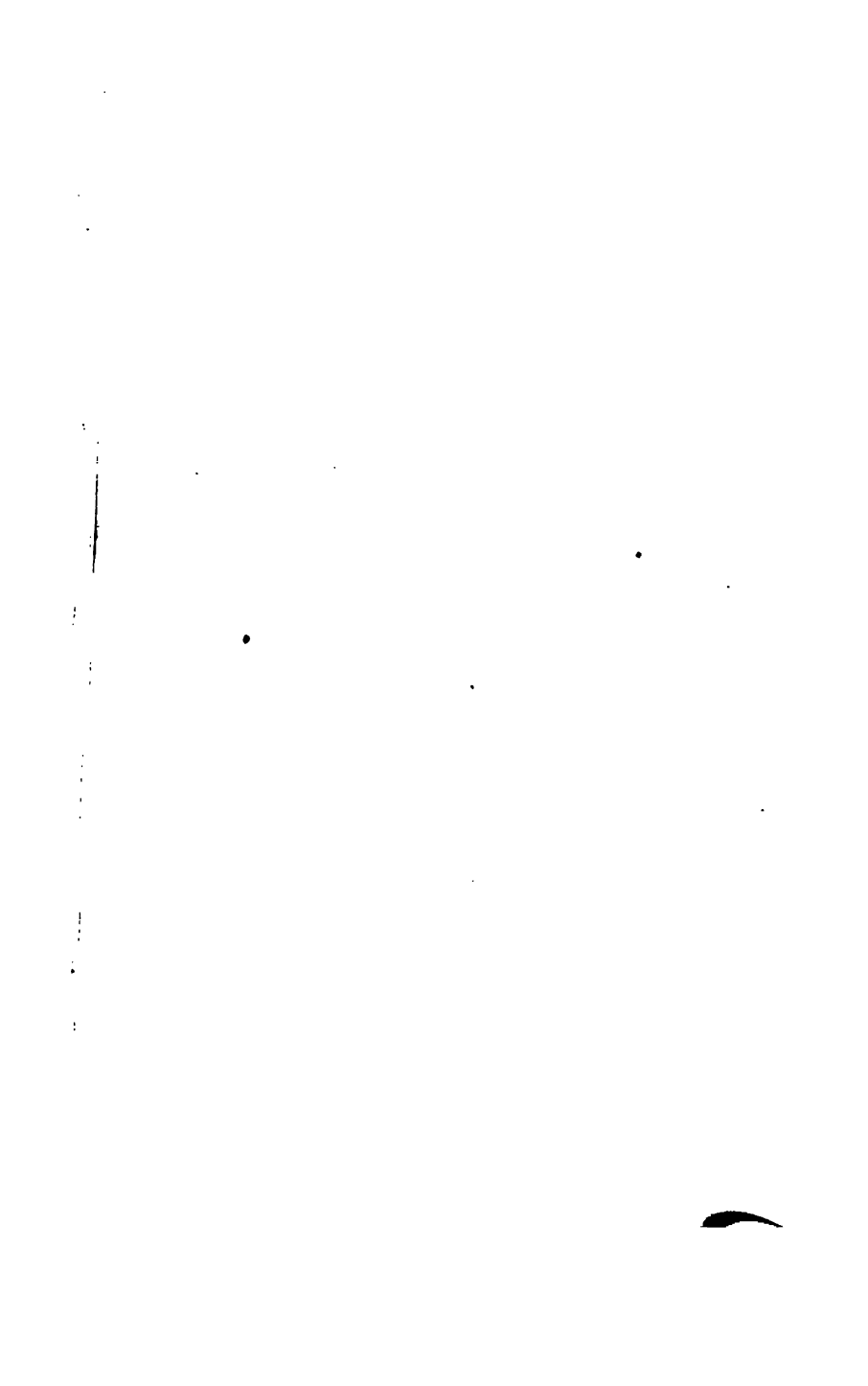


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SHOULD SHE HAVE LEFT HIM?

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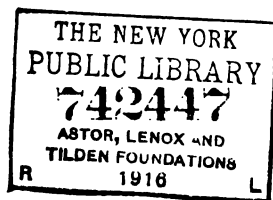
Should She Have Left Him?

By ^{Hudson, W. C.} BARCLAY NORTH, (Wm. C. Hudson),
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Was It," "Vivier of Vivier, Longman &
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WOMAN WHO

Should She Have Left Him?

CLUB
YEAR

SHOULD SHE HAVE LEFT HIM?

BOOK I.—REVELATION.

CHAPTER I.

A SARATOGA EVENING.

THE number ended with a crash of horns and kettledrums. Trescotte, under the pretense of looping up a swaying branch of the creeping vine, threatening havoc to the *coiffure* of his bride of three months, leaned over her and said in a low tone:

"I'll lure Davis away with the bait of a cigar; then shake him and come to you for a stroll in the park before retiring."

Mrs. Trescotte, young and beautiful, with shining eyes lifted a beaming acquiescence.

For a fleeting moment Trescotte was tempted to defy the conventionalities and embrace his wife before the multitude. For a fleeting moment, too, Tracey Harte, leaning against a pillar in an adorable attitude, contemplated existence with such a woman apart from club, stable, and the English valet he had just achieved.

As Trescotte, followed by Davis, carefully threaded

his way among the women crowding the veranda. Mrs. Trescotte moved her chair so that she looked out upon the park within the three sides of the great building, to the disappointment of Tracey Harte, who had seen, in the absence of her husband, opportunity to put his own fascinations on dress parade.

Mrs. Trescotte was very happy. Life with Trescotte was all she had imagined it to be in the days of dreams and promise.

The orchestra began another number. This time a selection in accord with her mood—tenderly melodious, with a deep plaintive undertone of rest and peace. She surrendered herself to its enjoyment and gazed out upon the green lawn with its black shadows and the broad graveled paths, where the electric lights photographed in fantastic network the limbs and foliage of the trees through which they shone, dimly conscious that immediately beneath her were seated two men who smoked fragrant cigars and murmured a conversation the music did not interrupt.

She was very happy. At another time she would have resented this desecration of music, but now everything seemed to fit into her mood—the music, the lights, the soft languorous air, the swaying branches, their responsive shadows on the broad graveled paths, the murmuring voices beneath, even the fragrant smoke of the cigars—all seemed to be of the atmosphere of love.

Of course, I know this was very absurd in a young

woman of fashion of the highest social rank, and who had been married all of three months—at vulgar Saratoga, too—but then, who of us have not had our aberrations.

The music died away—so softly indeed that Mrs. Trescotte was only made conscious of the end of the programme by the movement of the people on the veranda. In a moment more it was comparatively deserted. The musicians gathered up their instruments and flitted away. The uniformed hall boys moved back the music stands, and arranged the chairs into their customary platoons. Mrs. Trescotte, now a conspicuous figure in her solitariness, continued to look out upon the park with its delicate tracery of shadows upon lawn and broad graveled paths. The voices of the two men beneath came up distinct and audible.

“A most extraordinary tale—such complications,” said one voice.

“Isn’t it?” asked the other. “No one will accuse me of inventing it, for it is beyond my powers.”

“Simply extraordinary. Bronson Howard ought to get hold of it for his next comedy, by Jove!”

“Its tragedy, my boy.”

“For the woman, yes. But think of the man’s position. Married innocently to two women and not knowing which is his wife. She’s my wife; no, she isn’t; yes, she is. Tragedy it may be, but broad comedy as well.”

“I can see nothing but the tragedy, the pathos, the wreck of lives.”

"What will the new bride do?"

"Leave him of course, as a first step. Afterward, what? Have him indicted for bigamy? What good? He was innocent of wrongdoing. She can do nothing. Her life is ruined. There is no place for her but in retirement."

"Will he go back to the other woman?"

"I doubt it. It was a foolish marriage at best—when he was very young. They were separated in a few months."

"And neither knows the truth yet?"

"None of the parties involved, except Adams."

"And you have come here to inform him—to break up his honeymoon."

"That's the melancholy truth of it. As soon as I reached New York I consulted Strateweighs—the head of our firm, you know. He was very clear about it. It was my duty as his counsel, Strateweighs said. They must know the truth. Good Heavens! why couldn't I have learned the truth four months ago? Here I've been traveling with this man for six months, and only as we are about to part did he consult me as to his own position, so revealing the whole story."

"I feel as if I had been spending an evening at the theater. Either your story has dramatic interest, or your recital has."

"You know the *dramatis persona*."

Mrs. Trescotte arose, nervously anxious to get away from the sad story. As she turned from the railing her husband came to her.

"I have shunted Davis on to Parkinson," he laughed. "Another numismatologist. They are worrying each other already and good for the whole night."

His tone changed quickly to one of apprehension, as he looked at her.

"What is the matter? What has occurred?"

As she handed him her wrap she smiled sadly. He saw she was struggling to keep back her tears.

"Little that I know," she replied, as she prepared to receive the wrap about her shoulders. "I have been hearing the fragment of a very sad story."

Then she took his arm, leaned heavily upon it; as she looked up into his eyes, her own filled with love. She said:

"O Harry, a lawyer has come here to-night to tell a bride, only married as long as we have been, that she is not married to her husband—that he is really married to another woman, and he is innocent of any wrongdoing."

"He is ignorant of wrongdoing?" asked Trescotte, quickly sympathetic.

"He is ignorant and innocent," she replied. "God help and pity her if she loves him as I do you!"

Trescotte drew her closer to him, and, looking down upon her said tenderly:

"God help and pity him, if he loves her as I do you!"

Then perceiving the teardrops trembling in her eyes, he led his fair young bride down the steps to

the broad, graveled paths where the delicate, fantastic shadow tracery was.

Surely this young woman had gotten into the wrong century. She, of aristocratic training, from that world where marriages are made from considerations of——

“Well, I shan’t tell them to-night, anyhow. Come, let us get a cooling drink, and then I’m off to bed. I haven’t been out of a car berth for twelve nights.”

Two men came out of a by-path and went off in the direction of the shining lights.

Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte went up into the shadows.

CHAPTER II.

DOROTHY'S IDYL.

MRS. TRESCOTTE was very happy. She had married the man of her choice.

The opposition to Trescotte, because he lacked the wealth Mrs. Courtenay deemed necessary to the place her daughter should occupy in the exclusive world in which they moved, had been dispelled, happily, a few months before the wedding.

Trescotte had grown to manhood, and lived the life thereafter of one having the assurance of a large inheritance, trained to no pursuit or profession. When, however, the elder Trescotte died it was discovered that he had devoted the last decade of his life to turning valuable New York real estate into questionable securities, with the result of nearly dissipating a fine property. At the end of some months of vexatious and confusing labor the young man found himself in possession of a property of only eight thousand a year—an amount which Mrs. Courtenay said some time later, when his income became a matter of concern to her, any clerk could earn in a twelve-month, and which was but half the amount young Waldemar, son of the great German banker, spent each year on his horses alone.

Waldemar had been selected as a son-in-law by Mrs. Courtenay because of his wealth and aristocratic connections abroad.

Trescotte's income was small compared with that which the world expected him to possess. When its figures were known he was immediately reduced from that enviable position—a marriageable quantity. It certainly was reprehensible in Trescotte, having ceased to be a desirable *parti*, to continue to frequent the halls of society—to bring that charming personality, that winning face, that graceful tongue, both wise and witty, to functions where young and sometimes incautious girls came to find husbands. Moreover, it was embarrassing to the matron mothers. To drop him rudely from their invitation lists was impossible, for many of them dated their social success from the day when their own names were entered upon that list of his mother's. Besides, he was widely and closely connected with the most exclusive of the nice people. Having committed the unforgivable crime of disappointing the world in his financial realizations, he should have had the grace to withdraw himself, with his charming personality, his polished manners, and his diminished income. But he didn't. He went about just as he had done when all the world supposed he would have the income of a millionaire. It was stupid of him, I confess, but really he was unconscious of the crime he had committed.

Mrs. Trevor-Allen, that incomprehensible young wife of a very old man, won doubting applause

from the matrons, by the remark that Trescotte was without redeeming vices, and would not be so dangerous if he would but devote himself to the young married women instead of the young girls.

Trescotte was yet a subject of discussion when he relieved the anxiety of all the matron mothers, save one, by devoting himself ardently to Dorothy Courtenay. Mrs. Courtenay's anguish was not allayed by the further discovery that these attentions were not disagreeable to her daughter.

Dorothy had always given her mother a great deal of trouble. Thinking for herself, her conclusions were alarming, because in Mrs. Courtenay's opinion they were radical, not to say anarchical. She had been heard to express the belief that all of life's happiness was not to be found in the exclusive world in which her mother lived, and for which she had been trained. On another occasion she had ruined her father's breakfast by the remark that wealth was not essential to a useful life. But when she gave expression to the heresy that she would prefer as a husband a man whom she could respect for his ability, attainments, and correct life—even if of moderate means—to the average man of her acquaintance, however rich, it was voted in the family that Dorothy was cursed with opinions, fairly incendiary, and Mrs. Courtenay at once took her in hand.

"You spring from two of the great families of this country," she said, "and your life must be controlled and directed by that fact. God has placed

you in this station of life, the highest in the land, and you have duties and obligations in consequence. It is only within the present generation that we have received that recognition from abroad which is our due. Now, we are received by the nobility of other countries upon equal ground. This recognition has only been obtained by great caution, intermarriage, and the observance of well fixed rules—principally the latter. Entrance to our circle has been made difficult, and only after the right to enter has been fully established. The most frequent effort has been made through marriage, so the rule was made that the members of the older families should marry among themselves; this has kept the blood pure. Then it has been made a rule that wealth should marry wealth. In England they not only have the advantage of us in titles which distinctly place the rank, but they have also the law of primogenitureship by which fortunes are kept intact. Here the whole tendency is to division of wealth. And so, in order to keep fortunes together, we have been compelled to concentration by marriage. An aristocracy is necessary to the making of good society; and an aristocracy cannot be maintained without wealth. We, of the aristocracy, must do our duty to the station of life in which we find ourselves, for in society properly constituted there must always be a standard of morals, culture, and refinement, and that standard can only be maintained by the best people. And, therefore, the best people must seek only those matrimonial

alliances which make for the common good of our caste—among themselves, where wealth is.”

“And yet,” replied Dorothy, and I regret to say, disputatiously, “Mr. Waldemar is welcomed to matrimonial alliances, though he is far enough removed from our American families.”

“You forget,” returned her mother in her most stately manner, “that Mr. Waldemar is allied to the nobility of his native country; that on taking residence here he enters our circle by right of birth thus drawing the bonds between the best people of two countries closer together, while he contributes large wealth to the common stock.”

“Mr. Trescotte,” suggested the daughter, “is a descendant of one of the oldest of the American families.”

“Mr. Trescotte,” promptly returned the mother with much severity, “has forfeited his rights by permitting the means by which he could maintain the traditions of his family and his place in our order to be wasted.”

“Why, mamma,” exclaimed the girl with that ridiculous adherence to exact truth which always so disconcerted Mrs. Courtenay, “it was his father who ruined the property.”

“His misfortune then; and misfortunes of the kind are little less than crimes.” And then the good lady, losing her temper, lost her case by adding: “It is not becoming in you to dispute me. You must give heed to my words and obey me. Mr. Waldemar is disposed to be attentive to you,

and I demand that proper respect be shown him."

"Mr. Waldemar should first respect himself," replied Dorothy rebelliously. "His life does not commend him to a young woman as a good husband."

"Now for Heaven's sake," cried Mrs. Courtenay, actually growing vulgar, as she grew angrier, "have you been bitten by the new craze?"

"What craze, mamma?"


"That idea ill-bred people are so indecently urging, that woman should demand the same purity in man, man demands in woman."

"Is there such a craze? I did not know it; but it seems to me to be very proper."

"I have no patience with you, Dorothy. You are wholly unlike your sisters. Where you, who have, been brought up so conservatively, can have picked up your radical notions, I cannot comprehend. But listen to me. You must cease your encouragement of Mr. Trescotte. If you do not, I shall be compelled to deny him the house."

Mrs. Courtenay ended the discussion by leaving the room, having made, true to her sex, the point, which was her sole object in the conversation, in her last remark.


In truth, Mrs. Courtenay fled from the discussion. She stood in awe of her daughter, deny it to herself as she might. Dorothy possessed the vexatious faculty of making her mother appear as if she were uttering false morals in these discussions, by the



simple process of presenting ideas, very well when applied to grocers and other laboring people, but absurd applied to people of rank and wealth, with their complex obligations.

Mrs. Courtenay's lecture did not make the intended impression on Dorothy. In fact Dorothy dismissed it as nonsensical. She resented, of course, the charge that she was encouraging Mr. Trescotte in his attentions; she knew it to be false. A rapid review assured her that there had been nothing loverlike in Trescotte's attentions, or in her reception of them. She had been pleased with him from their first meeting. Intuitively appreciating his worth early in their acquaintance, she had come to learn that he was a man who, for his amusements, sought art rather than horses, and literature rather than gossip; and, for occupation, scientific experiment rather than the stock ticker. Who, for companions, preferred men who could bring to their intercourse something more than the last quotation from the Board and the weights for the next handicap, even if all of them did not frequent the houses of Mrs. Courtenay's world. Such was the singular perversity of Dorothy's nature, that this appreciation of the man had operated to a prejudice, in his favor.

The real effect of her mother's ill-tempered words was to open her eyes to possibilities which until then had not occurred to her, but which, being revealed, were the reverse of unpleasant. She sat a long time pondering on this revelation—so long,



indeed, that when she emerged from her abstraction, her head ached, but, she had reached a conclusion as to what she should do in the event of a certain great big IF.

The next time Trescotte called, Dorothy told him she would be his wife. But not, of course, until after he had asked.

He lingered at the door a moment as he was taking his leave, on this momentous occasion, and, after a little hesitation, said:


"I shall go at once to your father. There is a certain episode in my life of which I must speak before I can take his consent. It is not a bar, only an unpleasant remembrance. The knowledge shall be yours, should I be fortunate enough to obtain your father's approval."

A young man of prompt execution, he went straightway to Mr. Countenay and placed that gentleman in a very embarrassing position.

Mr. Courtenay knew that his wife destined Dorothy for Waldemar. In such matters Mr. Courtenay deferred to his wife as much the easier way; but there was another side to this situation. He passed in the world for a man of strict probity and upright dealing; yet, in his heart of hearts, he knew that he had largely contributed to the diminution of the property of the elder Trescotte, by inducing that old gentleman to exchange excellent Broadway property for certain railroad bonds which had rapidly lessened in value until they were worth comparatively nothing, while the real estate, in the

same time, had more than doubled. At the time of the exchange, and indeed for some time thereafter, the bonds were quoted at a premium. This was a fact not to be denied. No one, much less the elder Trescotte, had ever charged Mr. Courtenay with having unloaded unprofitable holdings upon a friend. It was all ascribed to his good luck and to Mr. Trescotte's bad luck that the smash should have come when it did. But the fact was, that Mr. Courtenay had possessed knowledge of certain events about to occur, which in the nature of things would practically wipe out the bonds, and he had hastened to get rid of them before the knowledge became general. So when this young Trescotte, with his charming manners and correct habits, came to ask for his daughter Dorothy, all the objection he could raise was what Mrs. Courtenay had made—Trescotte's lack of wealth, and he, Courtenay, had largely helped to that lack.

If Trescotte regarded Dorothy as a possession beyond fine gold, as I must confess I believe he was impracticable enough to do, he would have blessed that exchange which took so much wealth from him, for having decided to give his daughter to Trescotte, under an impulse of regret for having treated the elder Trescotte so shabbily, Mr. Courtenay put forth a restraining hand against Mrs. Courtenay when she was disposed to make it unpleasant for the young people who had become engaged at the very time she was laying deep plans to separate them.



Mr. Courtenay made so light of the episode Trescotte had spoken of that he did not even mention it to his wife. Mrs. Courtenay, on her side, had her compensation, by achieving that which is so dear to woman heart—a grievance, which was tenderly nursed, not only by her, but by her dear friends, the matron mothers, who could afford to expend large sympathy, since their own ewe lambs were safe from the fascinations of this very dangerous young man.

The engagement took up its place in the Courtenay household, where it was tolerated only by all save Dorothy, who, having made it her religion, worked herself into a sort of exaltation in the contemplation that nothing sordid entered into her romance.

A sensation of an extraordinary character, however, marked the course of this romance.

Two railroad companies, one nearly moribund, a goodly portion of the worthless stock and bonds of which were held by Trescotte and retained because he could not sell them, began a fight over a tract of land which someone had discovered contained lead, or iron, or coal, or something else equally dear to the railroad heart, the title deeds of which, curiously enough, were also held by Trescotte, as evidences of his father's foolish financial schemes.

The young man was drawn into the very vortex of the fight, from which, after a laborious and bewildering period of two months, he emerged shorn of his stocks and bonds and title deeds, but

with two millions or more to his credit in the bank, awaiting investment.

Virtuous actions have their rewards. Mr. Courtenay was credited with being a very shrewd old fellow who had seen the possibility from the first, and Mrs. Courtenay found compensation in the rapid change of her dear matron mother friends from self satisfied sympathy to mortified envy.

There is a vast difference between an income of eight thousand and eighty thousand a year, and that is the reason why the prospective son-in-law, who had leaped from one to the other, appreciated a sudden change in the atmosphere in and about the Courtenay mansion—it was more balmy and genial. I am compelled to admit, however, that I saw traces of a littleness of spirit upon the part of Dorothy, in that she seemed to show regret over this change in the fortunes of her lover. I am really afraid that the notion crept into her silly, romantic head, that a sweet something, akin to a sacrifice, had been taken out of their idyl.

So, in due course of time, they were married, and by the Bishop, too, for Mrs. Courtenay insisted on that, and the world came to the wedding, bringing those valuable presents it never would have brought to the wedding of an eight thousand dollar man. The bride and groom went on their travels, and at the end of three months brought up at Saratoga, where we found them in the first chapter.

CHAPTER III.

WIFED, NOT WEDDED.

MR. AND MRS. TRESBOTTE breakfasted late on the morning following the evening Dorothy had heard the fragment of the sad story she told her husband.

They were hardly seated at the table when Mr. Magrane, the lawyer who had piloted Tresbotte through the sea of legal complications and finally landed him in the port of a millionaire, came to them.

Mr. Magrane had never met Mrs. Tresbotte, and so was presented by her happy possessor. As he told them he was just returned from the Pacific Coast, whither he had been for six months straightening out the troubles of the ownership of a gold mine, he regarded Mrs. Tresbotte with so singular, and indeed curious, an interest that Dorothy was quite offended. And yet he made a marked effort to be agreeable, so apparent that she, keenly observant and somewhat suspicious, concluded that there was ulterior purpose in the effort. Besides he puzzled her, for though she had not even heard of him before he presented himself, handsome, self-poised, polished in manner, there was about him

something strangely familiar. She could not divest herself of the fancy that this man, so agreeable and debonair, boded her no good. It was all very absurd and unjust, she knew. Her husband evidently respected and trusted the man. Their brief conversation revealed to her that Mr. Magrane was the lawyer whose ability and honorable dealing in Trescotte's rise to wealth she had heard her husband so highly praise, yet when, moving away, the lawyer requested half an hour's conversation with her husband on business after breakfast, her impulse was to warn her husband. Against what? That was the trouble. She had nothing but her intuitions, and she knew that man laughed at the intuitions of woman. So Dorothy held her tongue. They breakfasted leisurely, Dorothy not a little depressed and making an effort to appear cheerful and happy.

When Trescotte had taken her to their apartments he went in search of Magrane. The lawyer was found on the veranda just outside the doors of the great office, his morning paper lying unread on his knees, in a brown study, oblivious to the whirl and flash of the butterflies of fashion about him.

He arose promptly when Trescotte spoke to him, and rather nervously said :

"Let us go into Congress Park. I want to consult you on a matter of great concern. We can be entirely alone there."

They sauntered down Broadway, chatting on trivial matters, and turned into the Park, to a remote corner of which Magrane led Trescotte.

It was apparent that the lawyer was not eager to begin the consultation to which he had invited Trescotte. Indeed, it was with an effort that he began to speak:

"I am in Saratoga for no other purpose than to see you. Certain statements have been made to me that deeply concern you."

Trescotte took out his case and offered Magrane a cigar. The lawyer declined and his client, selecting one for himself, wondered humorously if this were a prelude to the achievement of another million.

"I want to ask you some questions—questions you may think impertinent," the lawyer went on.

"Why, Magrane," replied Trescotte, striking a match and lighting his cigar, "your questions could not be impertinent. Our relations are too close."

"I suppose so," said the lawyer, picking from the ground a green twig, and trying to tie it into a knot. He devoted himself so moodily to this occupation, that Trescotte, expectant, began to feel bored. The lawyer broke out abruptly:

"Trescotte," he said as he threw the twig from him, having broken it, "you were married to Miss Dorothy Courtenay three months ago. Does she know that once before you had gone through the marriage ceremony?"

The abruptness of the lawyer, the unexpected question, and the wonder how Magrane obtained the knowledge, perplexed and startled Trescotte. There was anger, both in his eyes and tones, as he replied:

"You are treading nearer to impertinence than I thought was possible, Magrane."

"I know it," answered the lawyer calmly, for since he had made the plunge he so dreaded he was in possession of himself, and the lawyer again, rather than the friend. "I ask the question as your counsel and legal adviser. Answer, please."

Magrane's manner disposed of Trescotte's anger summarily:

"Yes," he replied; "and at the very beginning of our engagement."

"Good!" cried Magrane; "that is far better than I expected."

"I don't know what you are getting at," said Trescotte, quite astonished at the lawyer's evident satisfaction, "but when I went to her father for his consent to our engagement, I did not receive it until I had told him the story in all its details. His approval was given after he knew everything I had to tell."

"Still better," broke in Magrane, rubbing his hands delightedly; "it is in very good shape for you on that side."

Trescotte was yet more perplexed by the lawyer's manner, but he finished by saying:

"Returning to Miss Courtenay to inform her of the result of my interview with her father, I told her the story without reservation."


"Very, very good!" exclaimed Magrane; "your conduct was manly and upright. Now tell me the story of the other affair, in all its detail, omitting no

point." He hastened to add, "I do not ask from idle curiosity. I have a purpose as you will soon know."

"I am not proud of the story," said Trescotte with a faint air of attempting to be humorous, "nor happy in recalling it to memory. It is a story so much more like the inventions of cheap romancers than an actual happening in real life, and is such a lamentable showing of my own weakness and absurd youth, that I avoid putting it on exhibition, except when necessary. Were it not supported by incontrovertible documentary evidence, I would not expect people to believe it."


"Yes, yes," interrupted Magrane with fine professional scorn for apologies, "but give me the story."

"Well," Trescotte went on, not a little nettled by the lawyer's manner, "when I was about twenty-one—nine years ago—I was in Switzerland where I had fallen in with an American family named Hallock, from Buffalo, consisting of the father and mother, son and daughter. We traveled together. The daughter, whose name was Elsie, and who was a very pretty little girl, was about my own age, and was principally noticeable for her alternation of spirits, either deep depression or reckless gayety. The son was some six or seven years older. There were no love passages between Elsie and myself, nor any attempts on either part. She treated me as she did her brother, frolicked with me when gay, avoided me when depressed. I regarded her merely as a jolly little companion of vacation days.



"In our travels we reached a village near which was a ruin Mr. Hallock thought worthy a visit, and it was here my troubles began. On the evening of our arrival, Elsie and I sat upon a low balcony under the windows of the room of the inn occupied by our party as a sitting room, Mrs. Hallock was dozing within the room. Where Mr. Hallock and the son were, I don't know. The moon was shining and the ruins were plainly visible, two miles away. Suddenly, and without a word to suggest the caprice, Elsie, who was in one of her moods of reckless gayety, climbed over the balcony railing, and let herself drop to the back of a horse, one of two standing saddled beneath. As she rode away laughing, she challenged me to follow her. Moved by the same spirit of recklessness, I followed on the other horse. I did not come up with her until she had reached the ruins. Here she proposed that we should climb to a ledge or balcony projecting from the remains of a battlement, from which, she said, she had heard a fine view could be had. I fastened the horses to the frail staircase by which the ledge was reached. We had not been there long before the horses, frightened at something, began to rear and plunge. I hastened to quiet them, but before I could reach the stairway the horses had pulled it down and, freeing themselves, had galloped away.

"We were caught as in a trap. The stairway was the only means of descent. At first Elsie thought it was great larks. But when repeated calls and shouts brought us no help, and it was plain that we



should have to remain all night, she began to cry and blame herself for the freak that had brought us into such a predicament. I soothed her as best I could. Finally she fell asleep with my coat about her, and my shoulder for a pillow. Later I fell asleep, and thus we were found in the early morning by the angriest brother I ever saw. Returning to the inn, we were loaded with reproaches by all the family, and especially by an insufferably conceited jack—a cousin and a clergyman to boot—who had, as expected, joined the family during the night, and for whom, I believe, Elsie had been destined.

“If my tale was believed it was not heeded, though Elsie joined in asserting it. Mr. Hallock insisted loudly that Elsie was compromised beyond redemption, and the mother filled the air with lamentations over her poor ruined daughter. The brother declared that those who had ruined his sister must care for her thereafter or deal with him. Finding that the worst construction was put upon the affair, and losing my head through my sympathy for Elsie, who I thought was basely treated, in a burst of chivalric anger I declared I would marry her then and there and thus put an end to the outrageous treatment of the girl. My proposal was eagerly seized upon, though Elsie protested strenuously, but wholly on my account. She was silenced, however, and almost before I was aware of it we were made man and wife by the cousin, who went through the ceremony as if he were attending his own funeral.”

"It looks as if it were a deep-laid trap for you," interjected the lawyer.


"No," replied Trescotte positively, "for if it was, Elsie would necessarily have had to have been a party to it, and I am certain she was not. But I do think now that Mr. Hallock saw what the opportunity afforded and took advantage of it. I myself, from my want of experience and by reason of my youth, set the trap. The father and son sprang it. Some question arising the next day as to the authority of this cousin to perform the ceremony on foreign soil, a civil marriage was had."

"Ah, there was your opportunity to escape," cried the lawyer.

"Yes, if the question had been raised at first, but a night had passed. Well, the details of our life for the next five months are unimportant. If we did not hate each other and quarrel, at least we made no professions of love. We were young, accepted our singular position with the light-heartedness of youth, tried to enjoy life as we found it, and to be agreeable to each other. What might have been the final result of our close association of course I cannot now tell, but when I recall Elsie's sweet disposition and many admirable qualities, I can imagine I could have in time grown very fond of her. But one morning, having joined the Hallock family at Berlin, a man named Adams—[here Mr. Magrane showed increased interest]—presented himself, into whose arms Elsie rushed with a cry of joy. Adams declared he had come to take his legally

wedded wife. Then a story was told which had been concealed from me. A year previous Elsie had eloped from Buffalo with this man Adams and had fled with him to Cleveland. Whether young Hallock was in Cleveland and had been informed by telegraph of their flight to that place, or whether it was an accident, I never knew, but, as a matter of fact, when they stepped off the cars in that city he was awaiting them, and with police aid compelled Elsie to return with him to Buffalo. Both Adams and Elsie insisted that they had been married before leaving Buffalo, but as neither could produce proof nor certificate, and as the time of her leaving home in the day and their arrival in the evening at Cleveland would indicate they barely had time to catch the train they arrived upon, young Hallock refused to believe their story. Looking upon the whole affair as something from which Elsie had been rescued in time to save her reputation, the family had hastened to Europe with Elsie to remove her from Adams' influence. But now he presented the indubitable proofs of marriage.

"Whatever there was of dilemma, and to the great disgust of the Hallock family, I promptly disposed of by asserting my satisfaction with the prior claims of Mr. Adams and by insisting that the previous marriage made mine invalid. It was plain to see where Elsie's heart was. If Adams was willing to take her after due explanation, and in knowledge, I, who had never pretended to a passion for the girl, was satisfied that she should go to him. I had sense



enough to compel all, including Elsie and Adams, to make written statements, duly sworn to, setting forth the exact facts. It was about the only sensible thing I did in the whole miserable affair."

"I have just spent six months with Adams. His story agrees with yours in all essential particulars."

This was the only comment Mr. Magrane made on Trescotte's story.

After a period of silence, during which Trescotte waited for him, he spoke. "Adams consulted me as to his own position in the matter three days ago. A new phase of this tangle was made known to him less than a year ago. A more complicated case never came under my review. I can reach no other conclusion than that Adams never was married to Miss Hallock."


"Ah!"

Trescotte was surprised, and looked to Magrane to continue. The lawyer returned the look without speaking until the silence became embarrassing to both. It was the lawyer who broke it.

"You do not seem to appreciate the weight of that remark."

"I certainly do," returned Trescotte, brushing the ashes from his cigar. "It is very hard upon Mrs.—Miss—well, Elsie. I sympathize with her deeply. If weak and deficient in judgment, I think she was a well-meaning girl, and she certainly loved Adams. It is hard for her to find at the end of all these years, though wedded she is not a wife."

"But she is a wife," persisted Magrane.



Puzzled by the lawyer's apparent contradiction, Trescotte turned inquiring eyes upon him.

"She is"—Magrane hesitated to inflict the blow—"your wife."

The blood left Trescotte's face so quickly that Magrane thought for a moment he would topple over, but Trescotte cried out fiercely:

"And Dorothy?"

Mr. Magrane turned from him with a hopeless gesture.

CHAPTER IV.

A GIRL BECOMES A WOMAN.

MR. MAGRANE'S gesture was eloquent.

Trescotte asked no further questions, but sat upright and rigid, his face expressionless.

The silence was so long that Mr. Magrane felt he must do or say something to relieve the strain. Mental suffering he had often witnessed; it was incidental to the practice of his profession. Within the year he had assisted in the unmasking of one of his own profession—a man of the highest social standing, whose punishment was more in the disgrace of exposure than in the sentence of imprisonment. In all these cases exposure had been anticipated and there was a sort of preparation for it. But in the case of Trescotte, revelation had come without even the suspicion of its possible occurrence.

"Of course," he said trying to assume an advisory tone, "in view of all the circumstances, the charge of bigamy against you cannot be maintained."

A faint gesture from Trescotte warned the lawyer that he was on the wrong tack; that Trescotte gave no thought to himself, but to the deplorable—the dreadful position of Dorothy.

The recognition of this and the mockery of sympathy silenced Mr. Magrane. Yet he felt that the man who sat so rigid and motionless must be stirred into action, so he finally determined to tell Trescotte the story as told him by Adams, believing that it must quicken the stricken man into thought. He began, but apparently without securing Trescotte's attention.

From this recital it appeared that Adams, less than a year previous, had learned that the civil magistrate who had married Elsie Hallock and himself, on the morning of their elopement, had been removed from office for misdeeds the day previous, and therefore had no authority to perform the function. Whether he was aware of it at the time did not appear, but a somewhat languid conscience had, after the lapse of eight years, moved him to go to Adams and tell him the truth. Magrane was disposed to believe that it was less a matter of conscience than a belief, on hearing that Adams and Elsie were separated, that his information would have value to Adams and consequently money value to himself. The separation was a fact. Though Adams had condoned the five months Elsie had lived with Trescotte, when Elsie's first born came into the world, and its paternity in the nature of things must be ascribed to Trescotte, those five months rose up between Elsie and Adams to the destruction of their domestic peace. When Adams and her father, who had in time become reconciled to his son-in-law, quarreled over a joint investment,

the final result of the quarrel was that Elsie left Adams and went to her father's house and care. There had been other children born to Elsie, and considerable property had accumulated, in the administration of which there had been some difficulty and embarrassment so long as Elsie was under her father's influence. Adams had brooded nearly a year over this discovery of his invalid marriage, confiding in no one, until being thrown into close relations with Magrane, and gaining confidence in the lawyer, he had taken counsel of him. Thus it was that the lawyer had learned of Trescotte's plight and of the invalidity of the marriage just contracted.

The lawyer's story had the intended effect.

"My—Dorothy must be told," said Trescotte.

"She must not be kept in ignorance," emphatically declared Magrane. "It is your duty to tell her, and at once."


"I can't, I can't! God help me, I can't! You will tell her."

There was such pathos in Trescotte's pleading, that Magrane, who had not contemplated such a duty, and shrank from it when suggested, at last consented.

"If it is to be done," he said rising briskly, "it should be done at once."

He waited for Trescotte to join him, but the poor fellow was loath to go.

"I know," said Magrane sympathetically, "what a blow this is to you. I would have averted it if I



could, but having learned it there was no other course open to me. You must see it in that light."

"Yes, yes, yes," replied Trescotte, putting out his hand and taking that of Magrane's warmly. "But Dorothy!"

"It will be very wrong not to reveal it to her. She must know."

Trescotte yielded, leading the way to the hotel at which they were stopping.

As they entered Mrs. Trescotte's apartments, a glance at her husband's face was sufficient to tell Dorothy that her forebodings were realized. What had occurred? With a cry of alarm she swept across the room to Trescotte, who put out to her a trembling arm and averted his face.

She turned to Magrane fiercely.

"What have you been doing?" she demanded.


"I?"

It seemed to him that Dorothy charged all of Trescotte's distress to him, and he resented it as an injustice. Before he could say more, Trescotte spoke, his voice weak and unsteady.

"Dorothy," he said, "Mr. Magrane has something to tell you. It is I who should do it, but I have neither the courage nor the power. Mr. Magrane has mercifully consented to do it for me."

Dorothy looked from one to the other, deeply impressed and much frightened.

Trescotte led her across the room, seating her in a low chair. Bringing another into close relation



he motioned to Magrane to occupy it, and without further word went out of the room.

Magrane did not find it easy to begin his revelation. When he did, a fine instinct warned him to tell the tale baldly, fact for fact, without sympathy for the woman before him.

He had a listener who was breathless in her attention, who followed the development step by step with burning eyes, who made no comments, who asked no questions, who showed no traces of emotion, except in her rapid transitions of expression, and these, skillful as he was, Magrane could not interpret.

When he had finished Dorothy asked almost sternly in her intensity :

"Have you told me all?"

"Everything! Without reservation."


"And you believe Harry—my husband to be without blame?"

"Entirely so."

His answer seemed to give Dorothy such satisfaction that the idea crept into Magrane's mind that apprehension for Trescotte had been her only concern, and that she did not realize her own position.

She sat with her hands clasped upon her knees and her head bent in deep thought, so profound as to seem to be oblivious of the lawyer's presence.

Magrane studied her. He noted the symmetrical head, the waving brown hair with its reddish tinge, the beautiful, delicate lines of her profile, the firm



yet passionate turn of her red lips, the perfect complexion, now paler than usual, the quivering nostrils, and the beautiful brown eyes. Those eyes baffled him—deep in color and rapid in play, but inscrutable in their expression. He, who prided himself on reading the human face as an open book, confessed himself at fault. All he could determine was, that it was the face of a soul that could love deeply and passionately. Her thoughts he could not read, nor analyze the emotions by which she was swayed. He could see, however, that she, who was facing a ruined life, was under marvelous control.

He thought, as he studied her, that she was the stronger of the two, and in this, her trial, would follow the dictates of her own conscience, and not be swayed from them.

Dorothy at length roused herself and asked:


"Where is my husband?"

There was aggressiveness in the emphasis she gave to the pronoun, and the thought again occurred to Magrane that she did not realize her position, so he said:

"The situation is a grave one; the complications are the most singular of any case I have ever had under review,"—the phrase was a favorite one with him—"and the injuries fall most heavily upon those least able to bear them, that is in the view of the world."

"Yes," Dorothy replied simply.

Magrane thought he was not understood yet, so he continued:



"I mean the two women involved—yourself and Mrs. Adams."

He hesitated over the name to apply to the other woman.

Dorothy looked up sharply, and replied:

"Yes, for Mrs. Adams, separated from her husband and with her children."

Magrane began to doubt his powers of expression when he found he had signally failed to make clear that the woman who for eight years or more had lived with Adams as his wife was not Mrs. Adams, but Mrs. Trescotte. Yet he shrank from delivering the direct blow that would awaken Dorothy to the fact he wanted her to comprehend. He sought another method.

"My statement of fact is ended," he said. "To advise is my profession. Though I am Mr. Trescotte's counsel, yet I can serve you in the same capacity."

The look Dorothy gave him was swift and searching.

"Ah?" Her ejaculation conveyed no meaning to him.

"I presume you will return to-day to your father. Command me in any way you may desire."

"Return to my father?"

She repeated the words slowly, with a wondering expression in her eyes.

"Yes," replied Magrane, "you see, you are not now legally the wife of Mr. Trescotte."

The first expression of pain he had yet noted

swept over her face so deep and poignant, that he regretted he had used so little delicacy in forcing her position to her attention.

At this moment Trescotte, who without comfort had been pacing the long corridor, entered the room. Dorothy sprang from her seat, crossed rapidly to him, and laying both her hands upon his, looked up into his face, asking :

“ Harry, is it your wish to be rid of me ? ”

It flashed across the suspicious lawyer mind of Magrane that she thought she was the victim of an intrigue.

Such was not the thought of Trescotte. He saw what the lawyer did not see : lifted brown eyes shining with love of him. Though Magrane was there, though Dorothy was not his wife, though he had no rights, he embraced her passionately as he murmured :


“ Wish ? The mere thought of separation has broken my heart ! ”

Dorothy freed herself sufficiently to turn a triumphant face to Magrane.

Why should the lawyer have accepted that triumphant look as a challenge ? Yet he did, for going to Trescotte, he said :

“ I ask that you leave me for a moment or two with—this lady ? ”

Dorothy did not fail to note that the lawyer had avoided speaking of her as Trescotte's wife, and she resented it, as was plainly seen by the flash of her eyes. She faced Magrane, as for battle, as Trescotte passed into the adjoining room.



"I conceive it to be my duty," began Magrane sternly, "a duty I owe Mr. Trescotte, you, perhaps society, to point out plainly to you your position."

Dorothy slightly inclined her head, but whether she intended it as permission to proceed, or whether in token of her understanding of his meaning, he could not determine, but he did not fail to perceive in her manner something which made him wish he had not taken so superior a tone with her.

"I have the profoundest sympathy for you," he went on to say, with more deference. "Your situation is not only distressing, but so far as I am informed, without parallel. Mr. Trescotte told you and your father of his former relation before he entered into engagement with you. He told you then what he and everybody party to the affair believed to be the truth. His conduct——"

"It is needless to discuss Mr. Trescotte's part in this affair," she interrupted to say. "His conduct is blameless. Please confine yourself to my position."

Magrane felt that her antagonistic attitude was due to his own manner, but he went on stolidly determined:

"I address myself to that," he said with a bow. "The marriage between Miss Elsie Hallock and Mr. Adams being invalid, of necessity the subsequent marriage of Miss Hallock to Mr. Trescotte, being duly performed, is valid."

Dorothy winced, but continued to look him steadily in the eyes.

"And consequently, the ceremony of your marriage to Mr. Trescotte is invalid—as if it had not taken place. You have no right to the name of Trescotte."

"That is the view of the law?" asked Dorothy.

"Of the law," he acquiesced; "and, as you will find, of society, using that term as you best know it."

Society! The word summoned up the vision of her mother.

"That being the case," continued Magrane, "you are not the wife of Henry Trescotte, and cannot remain with him, without serious results to your own reputation—without loss of your own place in society."

Dorothy did not seem to be as much affected by this statement as Magrane had expected.

"Is it not lost already?" she asked.

Somewhat startled out of his self-complacency on finding how well she realized her position, the lawyer hesitated before replying.

"It certainly has been changed."

"Lost!" she said imperatively. "Is it not? You say you speak of my position. Be frank. Society—the world in which I have always moved—is cruel to women. It forgives mistakes before it does misfortunes. Though I am blameless—will the world accept me?"

"I think," said Magrane evasively, "your world will sympathize with you."

"How? By regarding me as tainted—by closing

its doors against me. Why? Because I have been unfortunate, though I am neither wrong nor vicious. To my world there is no difference between myself, the victim of a misfortune, and the young girl who has weakly and basely yielded to the tempter, the victim of her own passions. That is my position."

This young girl, barely twenty, puzzled the astute lawyer. Had he not been a witness of that brief scene with Trescotte he would have declared that she was a glittering block of ice; therefore he concluded it was an exhibition of marvelous self-control, so calm and emotionless did she seem to be. It never occurred to this astute man of the world that he was a witness of the processes of an evolution. Before he could reply she went on:

"There are things which with all your wisdom you cannot comprehend—things only a woman can, and I cannot tell you. But there is something dearer to a woman, whether the Church has pronounced its sacrament over her or not, than reputation or life, and if this is struck at, she will resent it with all the power she has. At this, my world strikes madly, and it will strike at mine when it is mine. You instruct me as to my position? You have not the slightest comprehension of it."

There was no doubt as to her emotion now. He did not understand her meaning, but he felt her withering contempt.

"I meant to advise," he replied rather humbly, to his own annoyance, "your immediate return to your father. It is a duty you owe to yourself."

"A duty; yes,"—she was calm and emotionless again. "I know my position; now, I must learn my duty."

"You should not permit your affection for Mr. Trescotte to cloud your judgment," he went on, regaining self-confidence.

"No," she replied, "I must not permit my judgment to be clouded."

Her manner irritated him, and he continued with asperity in his tones.

"Nor should you permit the affection of Mr. Trescotte to influence you to any other course."

"Mr. Trescotte would not advise me to other than the right course." Her words were sharp and decisive.

"Then," he said with a bow, feeling strongly that if there had been a battle, the trophies of victory were not his, "when I have pointed out that you cannot remain under the same roof with Mr. Trescotte to-night, though you occupy different apartments, without incurring censure, my advice is done."

Dorothy, bowing to the lawyer, went to the bedroom door and said:

"Harry, Mr. Magrane is going."

Trescotte entered in time to hear Dorothy say:

"Mr. Trescotte and myself, together, will determine our respective duties."

"You will see Mr. Courtenay on your return and tell him?" asked Trescotte anxiously.

"Yes," replied Magrane ; " to-night, when I hope and expect to know his daughter has returned to him."

He cast a significant glance at Dorothy.

As he left the room, Trescotte turned wonderingly to his wife.

CHAPTER V.

EVOLUTION.


FROM the moment Magrane had revealed to him the complication in which he and Dorothy were involved, Trescotte's first thought had been for her. His own position he did not think of, not even of the distress and deep grief their separation would entail. That such separation would be the inevitable and immediate result of the revelation to Dorothy, he was certain. This conclusion was not so much the result of his estimate of Dorothy's character as it was of his own training and education, and his instant recognition of the influences of education, training, and association upon all girls of Dorothy's ilk and rank in the social world. It is true that Trescotte had no fixed ideas upon the subject; that he had never given thought to questions of relations of the sexes. So, when this social problem was suddenly presented to him, in which he was a factor himself, he took the views already made for him and applied them to its solution, so far as they would go. Dorothy was not his wife; girls in the walk of life of Dorothy do not live with men who are not their husbands; therefore, Dorothy would not continue to live with him.

It was simple and fundamental logic. Simultaneously with the appreciation of the horrible fact that Dorothy was not his wife, was the conclusion that she would immediately depart from him, and that in honor he could not raise a hand to stay her.

Such further thought as he was capable of in his distraught condition, was given to Dorothy's dreadful position—her life ruined by means of which he was the instrument. And what was maddening, he could see no way out, nothing that could be done for her. He was not deficient in either physical or moral courage, but he shrank from being a witness of the anguish Dorothy would naturally exhibit when she learned what her position in the world was. That was the reason why he had asked Magrane to tell her. Had he loved her less, he could have told her himself. He thought, too, and he did not shrink from it, that in her first grief she would reproach him, nor would he blame her if she did. He knew Dorothy well enough to know that, after the first wild burst, she would do him the justice of admitting that what he had done was done in ignorant innocence.

When, then, after the door closed upon Mr. Magrane, Dorothy came to him without words of reproach, with sober yet pitying face, and laid her hands upon his arm, looking up into his eyes, he was bewildered. He thought Magrane had failed to do as he had promised.

"You have heard the whole of the dreadful story?" he asked.



"The whole of the dreadful story," she replied.

"And you know what it all means to you?"

"I know what it all means to me."

There was no flinching in her looks or demeanor.

"You have no words of blame or censure for me?"

"None; except that you sent Mr. Magrane to tell me the story instead of coming yourself."

This was so different from what he had made sure he would meet that he was confused. He passed his hand over his eyes as if he would brush away the mists that seemed to obscure his senses.

"Come," she said, as she took his hand and led him to the chair she had occupied when listening to Magrane, gently urging him into it. Then bringing a low stool, which she placed at his feet, she seated herself on it, leaning her arms upon his knees. Looking up into his eyes, as if she would search the innermost recesses of his mind, she said:

"In this dreadful crisis of our lives, you and I must find out what our duty is—our duty to each other, to ourselves."

He laid a trembling hand upon her head and gently stroked her soft silken hair.

"I have ruined your life," was the reply he made.

"No," she said soberly and quietly; "it is for you to decide now whether you will ruin it or not."

Her manner was so calm, her mood so quiet, and she was in such possession of herself, that, failing to comprehend her, Trescotte's confusion was increased rather than lessened.

Unconsciously he expressed a thought aloud.

"It has worked a great change in you."

"Yes," she replied, almost without emotion, "a great change. I am a woman now; not the girl you parted from after breakfast."

Trescotte's despair and distress was pictured on his face. She took his hand in her own and intuitively reading his mind, said:

"It is your thought of me that is distressing you — of my future, my position in the world, of what people will think of me, of what I fear they will think of me. Have you no thought of yourself?"

"Myself?" There was contempt in his tone. "What of myself? What is there, except the loss of your love and of your life to mine, I cannot easily brush aside?"

Dorothy pressed the hand she was stroking.


"I do not reproach you."

"No. Were you to show emotion, I would be relieved. It is your calmness that distresses me. As you are not wanting in emotion, it must be the calmness of despair."

"You are much mistaken," she replied firmly. "I do not despair. Long before Mr. Magrane had finished the story, I had appreciated it in all its relations, had thought it all out, and determined upon my duty."

Trescotte looked at her inquiringly.

"There is nothing for which you could be blamed. Could you have anticipated this; had you had knowledge which you concealed; had you even



a suspicion of these troubles, and wooed and won me, the case would have been different—very different. So," she continued, with a charming air of enforcing a logical proposition, "if you were not to blame in coming to me, you are not to blame for the situation in which we find ourselves. You say you have ruined my life. Whether you have or not belongs to another part of our talk, and will be answered when we have finished."

Distraught as he was, Trescotte did not fail to note, now that the deeper powers of her mind were called into play, how orderly and methodical were Dorothy's thoughts.

"But," she went on earnestly, "assume for a moment that ruin has come to me, no one is to blame for it. It was an accident—just as the loss of our property or of our sight would be."

"You are very generous," he said.

"No," she replied promptly; "it is not generosity, it is only justice, and no more than the law of the land would mete out to you. That is what Mr. Magrane says. And you say that it is only important to you as it takes me out of your life. So we can dismiss you from our talk."

"Then it all comes back to you—your future—your ruined life!" he cried.

"Yes; it all comes back to me," she looked up into his face, smiling adorably. "I am ready to talk of my position. The first thing is, what is your duty to me."

"My first duty to you?" he repeated, somewhat

bewildered and taking refuge in a commonplace. "It is to see that you are shielded from misapprehension as to our relations."

A shade of disappointment flitted over Dorothy's face. It was not the answer she desired. Trescotte noted it, without understanding it.

"And what else?" she demanded with a suggestion of that imperative manner which he had found so charming in the days of their courtship.

"And to secure your happiness," he answered.

"That is better. And how is that to be secured?"

Trescotte was not so ready with the reply. It was so easy to say what should be done, and so hard to suggest the means. She waited for a reply.

"Well," he said after a little thought, "your position is, that you have lived with me as my wife, though not wedded. You entered the relation under the sanction of law and church. The world knows that. Therefore up to this time, it cannot blame you. But now you have knowledge that I was not free to marry you—that you could not enter into the relation of wife to me. Therefore, every moment spent with me after that knowledge will lay you open to censure—to the world's condemnation."

"In short," she said, forcing the conclusion he avoided in terms, "up to the present moment I am an honest woman, but if I spend another night with you I will be a woman with a lost reputation."

Trescotte turned his head away in deep pain.

Such was the dreadful truth—and none the less dreadful because she looked it in the face so bravely.

Dorothy pulled his face to her gently, as she asked: "And your conclusion is?"

"There is but one conclusion," he said hopelessly. "We must separate. You must gain all there is to be gained, by instant separation."

"What then?"

"Our intercourse must end, so that the world shall have no opportunity to censure."

"Will that secure my happiness?"

This time Trescotte did not reply so promptly. Happiness to either seemed so far away. "It is perhaps a step in that direction," he replied.

Dorothy averted her head, slightly bending it in thought, the while, however, she gently stroked his hand. Trescotte did not disturb her, but gave himself up to the thought of how hard it was to leave her, and that nothing but an ardent desire for her well being could make him consent to a moment's separation.

Suddenly she lifted her head and shot a question at him that seemed almost an echo of his own thought: "Does your heart indicate this course?"

"My heart?" he exclaimed, deeply pained. "Oh, how can such a thought be suggested to you? No, no; not my heart. It is the coldest judgment I can summon."

Her eyes lighted up with pleasure.

"And what would separation do for me?"

Trescotte hesitated in his reply, looking very hopeless.

"You know," she added, "all this is very serious to me, and I want to know all about it."

"Why—why," stammered Trescotte, not really knowing what it would do, for he had not looked beyond the separation, "why, at least, it will show the world that you have cut off all relations as soon as your knowledge made them improper to you."

"Ah, yes, 'the world.'" She gave to the phrase a peculiar inflection which Trescotte could not understand. "In other words, if I leave you now, I shall have secured so much respectability as the world will grant to one placed as I am."

Trescotte acquiesced by a sign, so pained by this evidence of Dorothy's recognition of the limitations of that respectability that he could not speak. For the first time he felt a self-pity that he, of all persons, was compelled to force that recognition upon her. She went on remorselessly, as he could not help thinking.

"And if I do leave you now, shall I be secured in the old position I held before? Will the doors of all the houses be opened to me that were open before? Shall I have the same friendships and companionships? Shall I be permitted to associate with the young girls as I used to do?"

Trescotte could not answer. She had entered upon a field he had not explored, except vaguely under the cover of the phrase "her ruined life."


"Or," she went on relentlessly, "will it not be,

that though I fly from you as if there were contagion in your arms, that I shall be a subject of gossip and insolent sympathy, until the topic is forgotten in the misfortune of somebody else; discussed at teas, to which I am not invited, and dissected at dinners, where no plate is laid for me? Will it not be said that I could have done no less to save my respectability, by the very people who will be careful not to leave a card for me when they call upon mamma? Will not everybody in my world say that I must not expect to take my old place, but must withdraw from public sight and contact?"

"Is not your view extreme?" protested the harrowed Trescotte.

"I think not," she replied thoughtfully. "Was not that the fate of Mrs. Hughcombe, whose husband left her, for reasons no one yet knows? Was not Mrs. Edgebury sent to Coventry because her husband was killed in a quarrel with Col. Birney, which grew out of Mr. Edgebury's charge that the Colonel was too marked in his attentions to his wife and had compromised her, although it was shown at the trial that Colonel Birney was merely seeking her good offices to bring about a reconciliation between himself and his wife? Well, let us assume I have done what you suggest—what the world, my world, commands, will not the fate of these women be mine? Shall I not be what they are—women with a past?"

Trescotte, heart torn by this implacable dissection of her position, cried out:



"O Dorothy, if my death could place you where you were three months ago, I would gladly welcome it!"

"But it can't, dear," said Dorothy. "So, we must continue to examine our position. Then, by doing what you think I ought to do, I would gain a respectability which would bring me none of the privileges or rewards of respectability."

Trescotte groaned over the inevitable conclusion. He again resorted to the irritating commonplace:

"You would do what was right in the sight of the world."

"Ah, that world!" Again that peculiar inflection so perplexing to Trescotte. "I would be doing what the people, who would carefully avoid me, would say was right. Well then, that point is settled. In the sight of the world, my world, to leave you would be my duty. To whom?"

Trescotte could not answer readily. So she went on:

"To you? You say your position is nothing, except as I am taken from you. To the world? What do I owe it, since it would banish me? To morality? I have obeyed every law laid down for me and am as I am through no fault of my own. To myself? Ah! what would it bring me? Would it secure my happiness?"

"Ah, poor child!"

The utter hopelessness of the outlook broke with increased force over Trescotte again.

"If," she said, tenderly nursing the hand she had

never let go from her grasp, "if there was happiness in my life before I met you, all that brought it to me would be denied me. Since you have come into my life, my chief happiness has been in you, and that too would be denied me. So the conclusion is, that to do my duty as the world sees it, is to gain a respectability which has neither privileges nor rewards—at the sacrifice of all my happiness."

The mists suddenly cleared from Trescotte's brain. He not only understood now, but he saw clearly the future of Dorothy, with its dividing roads.

"Dorothy!"

He sprang from his seat, lifting her with his arm and with an arm about her waist, he turned her face to the light that he might read plainly its expressions.

"You see," she said, looking up into the eyes bending over her so searchingly, "I have had such happiness in the thought of that beautiful home you have builded for me. And I have dreamed happily of our lives within it—that home which even now is awaiting us."

"But it is yours. I gave it to you."

The smile with which she answered him was ineffably divine.

"Would it be my home and you not there?"

Trescotte, drew her closely to him, and in a voice low but laden with passion, asked:

"You would give up the world for me?"

"If I leave you the world will have given me

by the time I shall have reached my father's house."

"You would forsake friends—family?"

"Have I not already vowed, in the most sacred place, to keep me only unto you, so long as we both shall live?"

Trescotte folded Dorothy close in his arms in an ecstasy of resolve that seemed to him like a new sacrament. But again Society loomed up on his vision—Society with its ethics and prejudices, too strong in its influences from his cradle to be lightly disregarded. Gently disengaging Dorothy, he took her by the hands and, holding her from him, asked:

"Do you know what this involves?"

"I have thought it all out."

"The world will condemn you."

"It will shun me, when it does not condemn."

"It will take from you that respect it will otherwise give you."

"But happiness will be mine."

"Society will ignore you—insult you."

"I can ignore Society. It has not a monopoly of happiness."

Trescotte silently held her hands, thinking profoundly and rapidly. His spirit was not timid, nor his love weak, and that was why he had the courage to think of and for her. He saw the yawning gulf between the life Dorothy had lived and the one she was so willing to enter upon. He was looking into the mind of the Dorothy who had passed through the ordeal of ostracism and renunciation, to find if

she would not then cry out against those who had not protected her against herself.

He let her hands slowly fall from his own, staggered by the fearful thought, and turned away from her, saying :

"The sacrifice is too vast ; it cannot be, it cannot be !"

He had taken but a step or two, when she was beside him with her hand upon his shoulder. He halted and listened to her words, thrilling in their persuasion :

"Do not ruin my life !"

The afternoon concert began on the veranda beneath. The solemn melody of the Lohengrin Wedding March floated in through the open windows. The tenderness in Dorothy's face deepened as she repeated the words :

"Entreat me not to leave thee, for whither thou goest I will go ; and where thou lodgest I will lodge."

He caught her in his arms, crying :

"Until death do us part."

The last train for New York was pulling out of the station when Mr. Magrane stepped on board. He had waited until the last moment watching the gate through which travelers pass through to the train.

Dorothy was not one of those who passed through.

BOOK II.—DECISION.

CHAPTER I.

MARRIAGE À LA MODE.

THAT Hilda Courtenay and Hermann Waldemar were engaged became known upon the plighting of troth. No more startling and sensational news could have been given currency in Newport. There was, to be sure, an unusually large crop of Italian princes, English earls, French counts, and German barons, but where the assurance of the reality of their titles had not been established, the poverty of their purses had. Therefore with his noble connections in Germany; his hundreds of thousands in hand and millions in prospect; his cottage in Newport, mansion in New York, and villa at Tuxedo; his stable of winning blood at Sheepshead; and his yacht in the offing, young Waldemar was the most desirable *parti* of the season.

Sore and bitter was the disappointment in fifty households of that superior and exclusive community when their young women, who had been in training all the spring, learned that Hilda Courtenay had been placed first, and the rest nowhere. It was the disappointment of ambition, not of affection.


No doubt, with their anguish was mixed a little fear of those acrid stings the matron mothers would inflict when reproaching their dear daughters for their want of success, calmly ignoring that these failures were quite as much due to their own lack of skill in manipulation—a skill which Mrs. Courtenay had exercised to the confusion and humiliation of her dear friends.

In the retirement of her own boudoir, Mrs. Courtenay, with pleasure and satisfaction, reviewed her triumph. It was *her* triumph because it was the result of her skill. Hilda might flatter herself that it was her own charms that had brought Walde-mar to her feet. Mrs. Courtenay was content that her daughter should remain in that blissful assurance, but that lady knew better; she knew only too well with what difficulty the young man had been brought to book; with what cleverness she had precipitated the situation from which there was no escape except through proposal. Nor did she in her indulgence of a natural elation fail to appreciate that the assurance of security would not be hers until she had seen the two young people safely married. She could not deny Hilda the credit of being a most excellent and pliable instrument. That young woman had beauty, though not of so refined a type as that of Dorothy's; and an air of fine distinction, which, if not of the dignity of her elder sister, yet, when tricked out for the course, was quite impressive. But she possessed that in which Dorothy was sadly deficient, a realizing sense

of her duty to the station of life into which she was born, and she was not cursed, as Dorothy was, with ideas. All this made her ductile in the hands of her mother; and skillful her mother was—an artist, rather than a mechanic—an artist who knew how to conceal art by art.

Not the smallest part of the pleasure Mrs. Courtenay derived from the contemplation of her triumph was in the knowledge that all her dear matron friends, who, in the rounds of pleasure of the next few days, would greet her with smiling congratulations, were now consumed with angry envy. With what never failing interest that trite reflection recurs, that most of our joys would turn to dead ashes, could we not know that their possession was the cause of envy, distress, and mortification in others!

It may be supposed that this young Waldemar, over whom all this stir was made, was a very superior young man. But we of that world which is much the larger have such differing ideas of superiority. John Brown, whose fifteen plays were damned, is compelled to look upon Alfred Barnes, whose seven plays were successful, as his superior; and if he doesn't, the managers, whose opinions are decisive, do. Charlie Smith who pulls in a single skull race may not think Tom Notting his superior, but the crowd which applauded Tom as he shot over the line first thinks otherwise. The dignified professors who hand to Nathaniel the laurel wreath evidently consider him superior to "Baby" Elling,



the quarter back, who on last Thanksgiving Day was carried off the grounds on the shoulders of as many of his admirers as could get under him. Young Sturdy, who is advancing rapidly in grasping the essentials of the difficult problems of transportation, and is steadily promoted by his admiring board of directors, is not regarded by the wives and daughters of those directors as superior to young Brochulst, who is equally skillful at turning a corner with a tandem or a four-in-hand. We all have such different standards. I am disposed to believe that, if a jury of a hundred were picked, haphazard, from passers-by of Broadway, any fine day, and Waldemar were presented before it for judgment, he would be voted a very ordinary young man. Because the danger would be, a majority would not deem mansions, horses, yachts, and prospects of riches, virtues, but rather accessories, most convenient and wholly comfortable to possess. And there might be a few who would insist that morality had claims for consideration. If such an old-fashioned test were applied to young Waldemar, I am afraid the crown of superiority would be withheld by such a jury. Not that Waldemar did not pay his debts; his income provided against that vulgarity. He was honest in his dealings where money was concerned—strictly honorable, as was shown in the way he provided for the little girl whom he had persuaded to abandon her family and the six dollars a week she earned at Grabbies' shop, when his affections were suddenly transferred, one

night at Foster and Vials, to a whirling divinity clothed in pink fleshings and multi-colored lights. Nor did he ever fail to pay his losses—and they were often heavy—at *baccarat*, after the dear Prince made that game fashionable. The men voted him a square fellow, who backed his horses to run with nerve, a straight-going sportsman at all the games, who devoted enough time to the business in which he was a partner to assure his father that he would succeed him with credit. With the women he was a model, for he dressed immaculately for every occasion, did not smoke on the top of his drag, nor show evidences at social gatherings of too many visits to the champagne table, and was so rich that he could give the woman he married everything her heart desired, and I ask, in all candor, as the world is now constituted, what more could be wished?

It was Tracey Harte, one of young Waldmar's intimate friends, who gave the fact of the engagement to the world. He was making a round of calls, previous to his departure for Saratoga, where the racing was about to begin, and where his and Waldemar's horses were to run. Mrs. Trevor-Allen received his first call. This was not because the Trevor-Allen cottage was naturally the first one he would pass as he sallied forth from his own roof, nor because familiarity with the Trevor-Allen *menage* assured him that the aged head thereof had reached that hour and state when a nap was a necessary preparation for dinner, but because this season

Tracey affected Mrs. Trevor-Allen and made her the object of his attentive adoration.

The young matron accepted these attentions neither as a tribute to her charms nor as a proof of his fascinations, but as a convenience, her husband having passed into that age and condition when he was neither useful nor obstructive. It was to the young matrons that Tracey devoted himself exclusively. The marriage ceremony, for him, invested the other sex with additional charms. The girl whose presence politeness only prevented him from ignoring, became at once, after leaving the altar where she had been breathing vows of devotion to a husband, an object to him of adoring interest. There was something dashing, reckless, "demn it, don't you know," in this pursuit, that suggested pistols and fields of honor—the first of which he had never discharged and the other he would not know if he found himself upon it. Yet he lived in daily hopes of a scandalous gossip in which his name would be involved, and an *affaire d'amour* with a high-born, youthful matron, which he had never yet achieved, but which was his highest ambition. He had shown more of good taste, and less of good judgment in his selection of Mrs. Trevor-Allen, than usual. For bright and witty, she was gifted with rare powers of penetration which enabled her to read shrewdly the people who came within her ken. Tracey's siege might have the exciting qualities of the chase, but it was destined to failure. She told him so, on the day in question.

"Tracey," said that most extraordinary woman in response to a subtle compliment, the coinage of which had delayed his breakfast an hour, "Tracey, it is great folly to make love to me."

The young man thought of something about folly and sweetness, but it did not take form in words quickly enough, for she went on:

"It is such a waste of your time."

He rose to the occasion:

"No time is wasted which is devoted to you," he said most gallantly, and with his most ravishing smile.

"Nonsense," laughed this most incomprehensible of her sex. "It is all wasted, from your standpoint. You're a very nice boy, Tracey, and getting over your youth very commendably. I am willing to be your friend. But you must stop making love to me. I fall out of love much more quickly than I fall into it. Why, dear boy, I don't remain in love long enough to serve the purpose of a single afternoon's gossip."

"Oh, I say, Mrs. Trevor-Allen," protested Tracey, "you do yourself such injustice, you know."

"Oh, no, dear boy," she exclaimed with a quizzical twinkle in her dancing blue eyes, "but I am trying to do you justice. I want to be your friend. You see, Tracey, dear boy, while you are quite an adept at love-making, you have not reached that degree of perfection when you can make a woman forget her marriage vows. Perhaps I am all very well to practice on, but really, in view of the career you

have marked out for yourself, I think I can best show my friendship by pointing out where you fail. There is no success for you in a career of gallantry until you learn to be earnest. It is like anything else in life, you must be in earnest to succeed—really in earnest—you must really fall in love with the object of your attack. You never loved me, you know.”

“Ah, now, Mrs. Trevor-Allen,” stammered the poor youth, “how can you say such cruel things, after all my devotion?”

“Because it is the truth. If you want to compromise a woman, you must not only make her feel that you love her, but you must, in fact, love her. Whether she loves you, is immaterial; better for your success that you sway her pride than her affections. As a course of preparatory training devote yourself to some single girl and fall seriously in love with her, with a view to marriage.”

“Oh, now, Mrs. Trevor-Allen,” cried Tracey, utterly disgusted with the advice, which if followed would in his opinion take so much from his *ton*.

“Now there is Hilda Courtenay——”

“Oh, she’s gone,” interrupted the young man.

“Gone? What do you mean?”

“Waldemar proposed last night and was accepted on the jump by the whole family.”

“*Io triumphe!*” cried the lady with a merry laugh.

“Dear Mamma Courtenay carries off the blue ribbon again. Oh, the tears of all the rest!”

“It’s dead luck, isn’t it?” asked Tracey, trying to

follow her humor. "She had a plater forced on her in Trescotte, and he turned out to be a winner. Now she's caught the first favorite in the pools."

Mrs. Trevor-Allen, repeating this technical characterization of Mrs. Courtenay's skill some hours later to certain mortified matrons, as a succinct summing up of the situation, rather than as an illustration of the proper use of language, sweetly and innocently added :

"Which makes it so difficult to understand whether it is love or well-doing in manipulation which is its own reward."

One of those perplexing remarks this perplexing young woman was given to. It was on this occasion also that she gave that celebrated bit of advice which was so admiringly quoted at the clubs the next winter. Mrs. Huntington, with three marriageable daughters still in stock, after a brief period of cogitation, emerged with the remark :

"Mrs. Courtenay has only one daughter left to provide for."

"Pool your issues and divide the pot while the game is in your hands," advised Mrs. Trevor-Allen.

"Priscilla Courtenay can't be chipped in for two years yet. Mamma Courtenay, with her skill, will be out of the game during that time. *Tendre vos pariers, les mesdames.*"

There are people who insist that they see a great deal of satirical wit in that speech, but all it suggests to me is an acquaintance with poker, Monte Carlo, and idiomatic French—three things I detest

in women, especially the last, which I don't understand, and under the cover of which such disagreeable things are said—I never know what until I get home and study the dictionary. But then I'm an old foggy.

Dorothy learned of the engagement by letter from her mother which reached her while she was roaming about in the fullness of her own happy honeymoon. Though she quickly detected the note of triumph in her mother's letter, yet she was saddened by the news. So little of the true caste spirit did she evince that she really fell into a meditation as to whether young Waldemar with his habits was the sort of man to make the wedded life of her sister happy. Dorothy *was* cursed with ideas. But she wrote a very pretty letter of congratulation to Hilda, telling her her troth brought new obligations to her life which she should study to comprehend; and another quite as pretty to Waldemar, whom she welcomed as a prospective brother-in-law, lightly hinting that the peace, honor, and happiness of the fresh young life he was about to take into his keeping could only be secured by strict observance of the vows he would make at the altar side. Mrs. Courtenay laughingly put these letters away when they were given her to read with the remark:

"What a dear, delightful prig of a daughter Dorothy is!"

This was three weeks before the dreadful revelations at Saratoga.

CHAPTER II.

AN ECCENTRIC HONEYMOON.

THE Courtenay-Waldemar engagement was no longer a sensation in July. It was an accepted fact, and society had turned to other considerations. But a much greater sensation—one which also involved the Courtenay name—was in preparation. The first ripples of it were felt, curiously enough, by those whose only connection with that world which makes its *habitat* in Newport in the summer, is that of servitors, caretakers of the city houses it had abandoned for the season.

One morning in July these people were much interested in a gray stone house in New York City, the windows of which looked out upon Central Park, and which had suddenly shown signs of life. It was not so much because the house was occupied, for it was current news in the neighborhood that it had been purchased and richly furnished by Henry Trescotte for the bride he had made in April, but because it was opened in July rather than in October, as was the understanding.

To enter a new house and put it upon a midwinter scale, with stable in complete array, in the hot summer month, when everybody who was anybody

had fled the city, was, however satisfactory to the grocer and the butcher, erratic. Those whose contiguity gave them opportunity for observation, but whose social rank made them uncertain as to aristocratic procedure, when they saw Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte sauntering in the Park early in the morning, and driving together in the afternoon, concluded that it was fashion's new caprice as to the honeymoon. Of one thing, however, they were in no doubt. A more loverlike husband than Mr. Trescotte no woman could wish ; and the man who did not adore the wife who received his attentions with such tenderness did not deserve the woman who had given her life to him.

But little recked Trescotte and Dorothy what these people said or thought of them. It was neither to set a new fashion nor to gratify curiosity that they had deviated from the paths of convention. When these two young people had determined to their own satisfaction what their duty to themselves and each other was, they set about considering what sort of a life they would lead. It was in this discussion that Trescotte made the discovery that in the determination they had reached they had by no means solved their problem. There was an ugly factor, of which they had taken no heed—that duty the world and society demanded as their due. In a moment of passionate exaltation they had sworn devotion anew and had determined to live for each other and each other alone, regardless of all opinions. But Trescotte, his mind now restored to its normal

activity, saw that society not only was powerful, but had innumerable ways of punishing infractions of the laws it made, whether just or not.

One thing was very clear to him. They must leave the hotel and Saratoga before their peculiar position became known. He knew, were that knowledge to become public property, that Dorothy would be subjected to the indignities of insolent curiosity and malevolent gossip from those who now were servile, even, in their efforts to secure her recognition. He did not falter in the course they had chosen; he felt neither remorse nor regret. Having cut the strings by which tradition and conventionality had bound him, when he first considered Dorothy's future, he was brave in his determination to face the world with her; but it was with a full appreciation of the spites and the cruelties of that world. He saw, and without flinching, that his stout heart and his strong right arm must ever be interposed between Dorothy and the world's numberless ways of insult. To shield her, to keep her even from knowledge of them, was to be henceforth and always the warfare of his life. He did not know to what extent Magrane had spread the knowledge he had acquired, nor how far malice might go in striking; it might even demand their retirement from the hotel. All this he thought the while Dorothy was nestled in his arms, content in the victory she had won, and happy in the sacrifice she had made.

It seemed to him to be the wiser course to go abroad for a few years, but when, after Dorothy

had agreed to leave Saratoga at once, he made this proposition, she firmly declared such a course to be impossible.

"What we have agreed upon," she insisted, "was so agreed because it seemed to us to be right—the only thing under the circumstances we could do. If anybody is wrong it is not us, it is society—the world—which, having made it possible for us to fall into this position, would, under an arbitrary law of its own making, punish us, who are innocent, by separation. No; if we go abroad, it will appear as if we had fled from the consequences of an evil we admitted. We must not confess what we do not intend, by running away."

Trescotte yielded to the inexorable logic that flight was confession. Moreover, he saw it was cowardice, and against that his soul revolted. Yet they must go somewhere, and the conditions would be the same wherever they went. So singularly strong are the influences of custom and habit, that it was with a start of surprise that he heard Dorothy, who had partly divined his thoughts, whisper:

"Let us go home."

It had not occurred to him that it was possible to reside in New York City in the summer months.

Dorothy's suggestion was the solution of the difficulties, but not of the problem.

Mr. Magrane did not see Mr. Courtenay on the night of his return to New York, nor for several days thereafter. The Courtenay family were in Newport,

a fact he learned when he called at the residence, and which Trescotte and Dorothy might have told him had they not forgotten it in their agitation. Fearing, however, that they didn't know it, he telegraphed Dorothy that night, and returned to his snug bachelor quarters with the intention of writing the story to Mr. Courtenay. But when he sat down to do so he found difficulties. To merely inform her father that Dorothy was living with a man not her husband would be to convey false impressions; and to recite the circumstances in detail was to engage upon more than one evening's labor, and his stenographer was not at call. So he contented himself with a letter which requested Mr. Courtenay to call upon him, when that gentleman next visited New York, with reference to a matter deeply concerning his daughter, "now known as Mrs. Trescotte," closing with the suggestion that were that visit made immediately, all purposes would be best served.

Mr. Courtenay, on receiving this letter, condemned all lawyers to perdition for their non-committal ways and legal phraseology.

"They are never certain of anything—these lawyers," he exclaimed, much irritated, as he threw the letter across the breakfast table to his wife. "The absurdity of that descriptive phrase, 'now known as Mrs. Trescotte'! Bah! Their caution in statement amounts to insanity."

"But what does he want?" asked Mrs. Courtenay, more concerned about the business than the lawyer's way of presenting it.

"Oh, something about property, I presume. Trescotte has made over that new house to Dorothy, through me. I'll go to the city in a few days. I have other matters calling me there." Thus lightly dismissing the letter, he addressed himself to his coffee.

The same day that Mr. Courtenay received his letter Mr. Magrane was notified that his telegram was undelivered, "the party having left town." He therefore concluded that Dorothy had gone to her father, and that he was out of the affair, unless it got into the courts.

When Dorothy "left town," she had gone with Trescotte to Albany, and from thence to New York on the following day. While she could not see reason for such hasty departure from Saratoga, she had not opposed it. Once in New York, and in her own house, she was so busy organizing its internal economy that she permitted several days to pass before writing her mother of their sudden change of plans. Mr. Courtenay, little impressed by Mr. Magrane's letter, had deferred his journey to New York from day to day, so that a week elapsed before he saw that gentleman. Since Dorothy made no mention of the momentous events which had sent them to a residence in New York in midsummer, the only effect of her letter on her mother was to cause that good lady to condemn the eccentricity of her daughter and son-in-law, and move her to write to her husband, who had departed before Dorothy's letter had been received, to call upon the young

people and ascertain the meaning of their eccentricity.

Mr. Courtenay, by calling upon Mr. Magrane before he heard from his wife, had learned of the cause, though not of the eccentricity. When he was admitted to the lawyer's room the door was carefully closed behind him.

"I presume you have heard all from your daughter," said Mr. Magrane gravely and sympathetically.

"Learned all from my daughter," repeated Mr. Courtenay, much impressed by the lawyer's manner, halting in his attempt to seat himself. "I have not seen my daughter, sir, if you mean Mrs. Trescotte."

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Magrane, much astonished. "Is she not under your care?"

"Do you mean, sir, her husband has abandoned her?" was Mr. Courtenay's indignant inquiry.

"No, no," hastily protested the lawyer. "You are ignorant, then, of all that has occurred?"

Dorothy's father was now thoroughly alarmed.

"Sir," he pleaded, "do not tell me she has forgotten herself."

"No, no, no! You misunderstand me!" cried the lawyer. "There is no wrong doing on either side—that is, intentionally."

Reassured on the only two points he believed to be essential, Mr. Courtenay lost his temper and demanded angrily: "D—— it, sir, what do you mean, then? Tell me at once, without this exasperating delay."

"It cannot be told in a sentence," answered the

lawyer, highly displeased. "Compose yourself. Take your seat," pointing to a chair. "You must listen to a tale which will give you much pain."

Trembling with apprehension Mr. Courtenay sat down. Without elaboration, Mr. Magrane in lawyerlike way told the story. The old gentleman could hardly wait for its conclusion to break out into angry denunciation of Trescotte.

"That will not do," put in Magrane firmly and severely. "Mr. Trescotte is unhappy enough, without being unjustly blamed. He informed you of the other affair when he asked for your daughter."

"But he lied to me, sir, he lied to me, for he said the other marriage was invalid," cried Mr. Courtenay.

"No; he did not," returned Mr. Magrane very coolly. "He told you the exact truth as he knew it."

"I shall have him indicted for bigamy," shouted Mr. Courtenay.

"No, you will not." Mr. Magrane by his calm manner was striving to cool the other. "A true bill can never be found against him."

"I shall sue him for damages."

"And drag your family name into a rude public scandal?"

Mr. Magrane knew his man. This flash-light picture of his family involved in a public scandal, to be read of all the world, instantly quieted the old aristocrat. The lawyer did not disturb him as he was thinking. Slow of comprehension, and of choleric temper, the superficial aspect of the com-

plication had presented itself, to the excitement of his anger. But as the effect upon Dorothy's life and reputation infiltrated his understanding, he was overwhelmed with sorrow. Turning a distressed face upon the lawyer, in a broken voice, he asked :

"What do you propose doing?"

"I have done all I propose to do," replied Mr. Magrane. "All I was authorized to do was to inform you. This I was requested to do by Mr. Trescotte."

"Where is Trescotte?"

"I don't know?"

"Where is my daughter?"

"I don't know. But as she left her husband, under my advice, on the day I informed her of the true state of affairs, and as she has not reached your house, I imagine she is waiting in some obscure place the result of my communication to you."

"She must come home at once," stoutly declared the father. "I must find her and take her home. The poor stricken dear! And she is innocent! She is blameless, sir, blameless!" He added this in a fierce tone, as if Mr. Magrane would combat it.

"No honest mind would say the contrary," calmly replied the lawyer.

Rising from his chair, Mr. Courtenay leaned heavily on his cane, as he stood over the lawyer, and said :

"Poor Dorothy! it is a bad mess. Her life is ruined at the outset."

A tear trickled down his face and was lost in his

carefully brushed white whiskers, which he shamefacedly wiped away with his fine white handkerchief.

"I am much to blame for not examining more closely into that other affair," he said; "but those documents were so convincing, and——"

"Do not blame yourself," interrupted the lawyer. "At that time investigation would only have confirmed Mr. Trescotte's statement. To have withheld your consent——"

Turning hopelessly from the lawyer, Mr. Courtenay with halting step left the room.

CHAPTER III.

A BEWILDERED FATHER.

MR. COURTENAY returned to his club too much disturbed to engage in other business. One thought was uppermost ; he must find Dorothy and take her home. But how ? She had disappeared from sight, leaving no means of communication behind her. A mighty fear possessed him, crowd it down as he might ; it was that Dorothy, in her disgrace, had ended her life, and the thought of it made him very bitter toward Trescotte.

On arriving at his club his wife's letter was handed him. A hasty perusal assured him that Dorothy was safe and, moreover, in New York. A sentiment of grateful joy took the place of every other emotion. He determined to go to Dorothy without delay. It never occurred to him that Trescotte was with her. Had he read his wife's letter with more care, he would have seen that Dorothy and Trescotte were occupying the house together. He had gathered the essential fact that his daughter was safe and alive, and the fact, in the distracted state he was in, was so important as to obscure all other considerations. And had not Magrane told him that Dorothy had left Trescotte immediately ?

This statement, as we know, was an error. It was not the purpose of the lawyer to mislead. When informed that Dorothy had left town on the night of the revelation, he leaped to the conclusion that his advice had been followed. That Dorothy should go to the house in New York did not seem strange to her father. The house was hers, held in her name, and he thought she naturally preferred the seclusion it afforded to facing society, as she must, were she to go to his home in Newport. Indeed, he thought she was prompted by that delicacy of discretion a daughter of Herbert Courtenay naturally would show.

When Dorothy came to him in the reception room into which he had been shown by a neat lad in livery, very satisfactory to his eye, critical in such things, he greeted her with an effusive tenderness, which was not his wont. He was not so unobservant as to fail to note that Dorothy did not seem to be utterly broken down with grief, but it was fleeting, this notice, all else was lost in the joy of finding her.

"My dear, dear daughter!" he cried as he tenderly embraced her.

Dorothy was much surprised at this greeting, so unlike her father. When his card had been handed her she had nerved herself for a storm of reproaches and angry protests. She knew what prejudices she was opposing, and that her father was the embodiment of them all. Believing her father to be fully informed of all the events, including her own determination not to be separated

from Trescotte, she was led into the error of believing that therefore the presence of her father in that house, that is, the home of Trescotte and herself, was in a measure approval of her course.

"You have heard all the story, then?" she asked.

"I have just come from Mr. Magrane," her father replied. "My dear girl, my heart bleeds for you. Had I only made an investigation! I blame myself so."

Dorothy checked him before he could say more.

"No," she protested. "Do not blame yourself. No one is to blame—no one at all can be blamed."

"Not even Trescotte?" exclaimed the old gentleman, surprised, for he had expected condemnation of him from her.

"No; not my husband—he, least of all."

"You are very generous, my dear!" There was the suggestion of a sneer in his tone, but faint as it was Dorothy caught it.

"Not at all," she replied with increased spirit. "Harry has acted most honorably and uprightly. Why should he be blamed? He was himself deceived, and he made no attempt to deceive us, or to conceal anything from us. Everybody who knew anything of the affair believed as he did—that the previous marriage was no marriage."

Mr. Courtenay was bewildered. Dorothy seemed to be more anxious to defend Trescotte from imputation than to bemoan her own fate. In fact, to all outward appearances, she was not sorrowing at all. She really seemed to be happy, cheerful, and

contented. This certainly was confusing to a father who had come prepared to find a daughter overwhelmed with grief, and hurling reproaches at him for his failure to exercise proper protection of her.

"Where is Trescotte now?" he suddenly asked.

"He has gone a short distance. He will not be long."

Mr. Courtenay stared at his daughter. Then in his amazement he almost shouted his next question.

"He is not here—living in this house?"

The scales dropped from Dorothy's eyes. She knew now that her father had heard nothing as to their determination as to their future, but she answered smilingly with another question:

"Did you suppose I was living here alone?"

Mr. Courtenay was speechless. Dorothy continued to ask questions.

"Did not mother tell you we had opened the house? I wrote her we had. Did not Mr. Magrane tell you?"

"He told me you had left Trescotte," interrupted her father, recovering somewhat from his confusion.

"He was mistaken," calmly replied Dorothy, nerving herself for the storm. "He advised that course, but did not give me sufficient reasons why I should leave my husband."

Her father was in a fog. It was plain to see he could not grasp the situation. His senses were obscured. One thing only was plain to him—the one thing he had seen from the beginning. He must take Dorothy home with him.

He struggled to his feet, and said commandingly:
"Come!"

"Where?" asked Dorothy.

"With me. Home."

"This is my home."

She was calm, but firm and strong. Poor Mr. Courtenay. He sank back into his chair helpless. His mind had broken from its moorings and was beginning to drift. He surely could not have understood his daughter.

"Do you mean to say," he began, "that you mean to live here, with this man—with this Trescotte—who is not your husband?"

"I mean to live here, of course," replied Dorothy, her head very erect, "and with Mr. Trescotte, who is my husband?"

By this time the old gentleman's mind was out in the current and at its mercy. He lay back in his chair looking upon his daughter impotently.

"Do you mean to say," he asked feebly, "that the story I have been told to-day is not true?"

"I believe it to be true, in every particular."

A gleam of hope lighted up Mr. Courtenay's horizon.

"Trescotte has found a way to break these bonds?" he exclaimed.

"Not that I am aware of."

He was drifting again.

"Then why do you call him your husband?" he asked.

"Because he is my husband."

This answer only confused the old gentleman the more. He began to believe it a case beyond him, and was devoutly wishing that her mother was with him to understand this daughter who had always been a puzzle to him, and never more than now. He sat quite still trying to comprehend it all.

"Father," said Dorothy after a moment, having waited for her father to speak, and perceiving that now she must take the aggressive. "Father, while you have been told of the discovery Mr. Adams made a few months ago, you have not been told all. And when I think of it, I don't know who could have told you except my husband or myself. I will tell you now."

Mr. Courtenay straightened himself into an attitude of attention. This incomprehensible thing was to be made plain. Dorothy, with the color in her face heightened and her eyes very bright, leaned forward, and taking from the small table at her side a fan, played with it as she gathered her thoughts. Mr. Courtenay, closely observing her, thought that with her brown hair, deep brown eyes, and clear brown skin showing through the black lace of her dress, she was in appearance a worthy daughter of an especially favored race, whatever her conduct might be.

"That day," she began, "when Mr. Magrane told us of the distressing discovery, Harry and I long discussed my duty."

"Your duty was to leave him at once!" interjected her father austerely.

"Yes, that is what was the first thought," replied Dorothy. "That is what Mr. Magrane said, and it was what Harry had supposed I would do."

"And tried to persuade you from doing," again interjected her father.

"You are much mistaken. He used neither persuasion nor command. It was I who, having thought it all out while Mr. Magrane was talking, thought differently."

"You?" Mr. Courtenay was aghast.

"Yes," continued Dorothy bravely. "If there is anything wrong in my being here, I must be charged with the wrong. But I do not believe there is. I showed Harry that we were innocent of any wrong doing; that we had obeyed all the laws of man and church; that if we were in a false position, where dishonor could be charged, it was not of our making. At the very worst it was our misfortune."

"Very true," acquiesced Mr. Courtenay, striving hard to follow his daughter.

"I further showed him that the position was the results of defect in the social system; that though we had scrupulously observed the laws and forms society and church prescribed for us, we were not protected from the failures of those forms and laws; that having failed, and we the victims thereof, both society and church would punish me, the woman, for having been the victim of its own shortcomings, though I fled from him at once."

This was a little beyond the old gentleman's comprehension. He struggled with the statement for a

moment, for Dorothy seemed to be waiting for some remark, and evolved finally : " There is always sympathy for the unfortunate."

Dorothy resented the remark with something like impatience. She knew it to be so untrue. But she went on with her statement.

" Now church and law being responsible for our position, and society inevitably punishing me for being in the position, all the influences would be for further punishment of us by separating us. So, after looking the matter over carefully, we refused to abandon our relations into which we had entered under sanction of law and church, to refuse to permit a system, or two systems, which had once pronounced us man and wife, to withdraw their sanction because of their own, not our, defects. We determined for ourselves that Henry Trescotte was still my husband, and that I, Dorothy, was still the wife of Henry Trescotte. What God had put together, we would not let any man put asunder."

Mr. Courtenay did not understand, but he was horrified.

" This is blasphemous !" he stammered.

" What is ? " asked Dorothy argumentatively. " That we refuse to be made victims of defects in social and churchly laws ? "

" It is blasphemous to talk so ! " cried Mr. Courtenay, clinging to the word which seemed so apt.

" I said churchly laws, father," said Dorothy, " not holy laws, nor the laws of God. Those laws were made by churchmen, therefore are human, and

being human are imperfect. No, I am far from being blasphemous, for I defy you to find in all of God's Word condemnation of our course."

This was getting into the realm of metaphysics, where the old gentleman had never ventured, and where now he refused to follow; he knew that Dorothy's position was opposed to all his teachings, and so he sprang from his seat angrily. "Enough of this!" he cried. "Will you come with me?"

"I will not leave my husband."

The issue was clearly made. The old man bowed his head and walked unsteadily to the door. Then, suddenly, as if a new thought had occurred to him, he turned quickly and bent upon Dorothy a swift and searching look. She had risen and was standing in the center of the small room, looking after him sadly.

"I see—I see how it is," he said as he went back to her, taking her hand. "Truly, you have had trouble enough to have unsettled a stronger reason. Good-by, child."

He kissed her, adding :

"You will see me again soon, and then I shall bring someone with me, who, I hope, can do you good."

He went out of the house hurriedly.

Mr. Courtenay had not been long gone when Trescotte returned. He found Dorothy still in the reception room, not a little sad over the interview with her father. She told Trescotte of her father's call, his demand that she should go with him, her refusal, and her father's remark on leaving.

"He meant that he would send mamma to me," she concluded. "Well, I hope he will, and soon. The visit of mother is the only ordeal I dread, and I want it over, so that we can settle into our regular and happy life."

They embraced each other tenderly, forgetting that servants were in the way, and Dorothy went to prepare for her afternoon's ride. About the time she stepped into that new Brewsters, drawn by that wonderful pair of hackneys which were the admiration of the neighborhood, her father was sending a dispatch to her mother, demanding her coming to New York without an hour's delay.

CHAPTER IV.

A DIPLOMATIC MOTHER.

MRS. COURTENAY complied with her husband's imperative demand. The demand, however, did not put her in an amiable frame of mind. It did not seem proper that one of her rank and social importance should be subject to the calls of such a modern, "hustling" thing as the telegraph. A letter by mail would have been more decorous, even if there had been thereby a sacrifice of time. She knew of nothing in their affairs demanding such vulgar haste. Nor was it proper that she should travel alone. Since her marriage she had never been on cars or steamers unaccompanied by her husband. However, she overcame the latter objection by taking her maid with her, and her husband's valet, who was conveniently married to that maid. Then, so unsatisfactory is the telegraph, she neither knew the meaning of her journey nor the duration of her stay. Consulting Hilda, that young woman, wise in her generation, said: "Go prepared for anything." So Mrs. Courtenay, within four hours after the time she had received her husband's telegram, was *en route* for New York with five trunks, two servants,

and a severe countenance threatening an uncomfortable meeting to Mr. Courtenay.

The hour was early when she reached New York, but Mr. Courtenay was at the station to meet her. What fund of remark she had stored up for her husband's profit and pleasure was forgotten in the first glance she gave him. His face told her that the business which had caused her hurried journey was serious, and her presence necessary.

"What is it?" she whispered after her hasty kiss of salutation, a fear of loss of property possessing her.

"I cannot tell you here," he answered. "Let Dawson look after the luggage. We'll hurry to the hotel."

"Is it loss of money?"

"Oh, Lord, no!" replied her husband. "But you must wait; it is too delicate a matter to talk of in public places."

Mrs. Courtenay was compelled to exercise her patience, but when the privacy of their room was reached she dismissed her maid and demanded to be informed.

She was astonished, distressed, but not overwhelmed, as the story was unfolded to her. Social position was not lost; that, a hurried review assured her. She was somewhat alarmed as to the effect the revelation might have upon the Courtenay-Waldemar engagement, and she saw the possible necessity of careful treatment to prevent a rupture of the most brilliant match of the season.

It must not be thought that she gave no heed to Dorothy's position, and that she was not saddened over her daughter's plight. But Mrs. Courtenay was not a common woman. She was like the commander of an army in battle coming upon the field after his troops had been engaged and had sustained slight reverses—like Sheridan at Cedar Creek, for instance. Does anyone suppose that, arriving on the field, that great soldier did not in one searching, sweeping glance assure himself of what had not been lost, before he addressed himself to repairing the damage inflicted by the enemy; that he did not detect in that rapid comprehension the possibilities of weakness in the points in the line where all seemed strong? Similarly did Mrs. Courtenay survey her field of battle. Before she began a serious discussion of Dorothy's position, she rapidly summed up what was not lost and what must be guarded to prevent being lost by the reverse sustained. She even stopped to upbraid her husband for his stupidity in not making a rigid investigation into that other marriage affair, and his turpitude in withholding knowledge of it from her. But however willing Mr. Courtenay had been to heap reproaches on his own head, or to rest meekly under those of his daughter, as he had intended, should she have reproached him, he was not content to hear a single word of rebuke from his wife, and made that so apparent that she desisted.

"Dorothy must immediately go home with us," was her conclusion, after she had grasped and

digested the situation. "It is the only thing she can do. If she remains with Trescotte her reputation will be lost, and there will be no hope for her social rehabilitation."

"Is there any now?" hopelessly asked the father.

"Perhaps not at once," hesitatingly replied the lady. "But when we have made the true story known with our color of it, and, with the great influence our two families, with all their connections, can exert, it will be accomplished in time. Unless——" she added hastily, and then stopping with an anxious frown upon her face she lost herself in deep thought.

"What is the unless?" finally asked Mr. Courtenay, tired of waiting for his wife to emerge.

"Nothing, nothing," replied that lady nervously, as she roused herself. "Order the breakfast, Herbert. I'm famished. Afterward, I will go to Dorothy. While I am gone you can arrange for another apartment for her here. I shall bring her back with me."

"I don't think you will," replied her husband, as he crossed the room to touch the electric bell. "She seems determined to remain with Trescotte in spite of all."

Resuming his seat, he gave to his wife an interpretation of Dorothy's argument of the previous day—an interpretation which his daughter assuredly would have repudiated. It was far from his intention to misrepresent Dorothy's views, but as it was

his understanding of them, it gave his wife an erroneous impression,

"Why, she is positively blasphemous!" exclaimed that lady, much horrified.

"That's what I told her," said Mr. Courtenay, much pleased to find his view sustained by his wife, and by the same word.

"The troubles must have turned her head," continued the lady.

"There!" cried the old gentleman energetically. "Now we are down to the practical consideration. There is the reason why I thought it necessary to send for you so hurriedly. I think she should be immediately visited by specialists."

Mrs. Courtenay stared at her husband dumbly. Her own remark was a mere figure of speech.

"You see," continued the husband, "you can't account for the position Dorothy has taken upon any other ground. She insists that she is wholly responsible for her determination not to be separated from Trescotte. He, in the very beginning, concluded that she would leave him, and she insists it was she who persuaded him to the other view. Now, when you find a girl like Dorothy, brought up as she has been, carefully guarded against radical and destructive ideas, a Courtenay, into whose blood is blended that of the Van Allens, both families having centuries of conservatism behind them, deliberately entertaining and acting upon such views as Dorothy expresses, why there is only one conclusion to reach—her reason is dethroned—temporarily, however,

for there is insanity neither in the blood of the Van Allens, nor the Courtenays."

The summoned waiter appeared and received his order, the while Mrs. Courtenay went into another brown study. Possibly her husband had given the explanation of Dorothy's strange course, and wouldn't that be the best excuse for withdrawal for a while?

"Well," she said aloud, more in answer to her own thoughts than as addressing her husband. "I'll have a talk with her first. After that, perhaps it will be well to have Dr. Balkin see her."

Dr. Balkin was the family physician, much trusted and respected by Mrs. Courtenay—very skillful, very brusque, and given to plain speech, whether the same was agreeable or not. Dorothy was a great favorite with the old doctor, and had been from girlhood.

"Why wouldn't it be better for Dorothy to come to us here?" asked Mrs. Courtenay.

"It would," returned her husband, "but she won't come if sent for. No, my dear, call upon her first and form your judgment. I think it will coincide with mine."

Breakfast over Mrs. Courtenay lost no time in going to Dorothy. The Trescotte mansion, for such it was, pleased her. She could not but admit that it would be desperately hard to give up such a house. She could not call to her memory any house of her acquaintance more perfect in its appointments, more richly, yet tastefully furnished,

and about which there was an atmosphere of greater refinement or more elegant luxury. When, in the broad spacious hall, on her way to Dorothy's boudoir, whither she had been summoned, she encountered Downs, the old Trescotte major-domo whom she had known since girlhood, she knew that the service was as near perfection as human skill could make it, and there was a feeling of pride she could not suppress as she returned the deferential yet self-respectful salutation of Downs. These old servants are the American patents of nobility.

If Mrs. Courtenay anticipated an easy victory over her daughter she was doomed to disappointment. Dorothy's greeting of her mother was warmly affectionate. She cried a little as she laid her head upon her mother's ample bosom. But it was from nervousness and affection, not from sorrow or a sense of shame. She had sat a long time with Trescotte the previous night, traversing the whole affair, and had retired stronger in her determination not to let the world and society ruin her life, and more confirmed in her conviction that the course chosen was the right one, and not in contravention of moral laws rightly considered.

Mrs. Courtenay soon discovered that the woman "now known as Mrs. Trescotte," as Mr. Magrane had put it, was a different person from the girl who had left her with a tender, clinging kiss, redolent of orange blossoms. There was a passing premonition that her task was not as easy as it appeared at the breakfast table.

Diplomacy is assumption and presumption. We assume that there is no other view of the subject we are about to discuss than the one we maintain and presume that this is conceded by the other side. Mrs. Courtenay was a social and domestic diplomat. She made her first move in accordance with the laws of the game. She met with an immediate check. Dorothy conceded nothing. Indeed she was positive there were other views than those entertained by her mother, which, though not held by everybody, were, nevertheless, based on truth and good morals. The issue was joined in the beginning. Mrs. Courtenay, with all the force she could summon and the ingenuity she could command, made a presentment of the conventionalities. Dorothy met it with the arguments she employed with Mr. Magrane, Trescotte, and her father, perhaps with a little more skill, because they were not a little more familiar to her lips and vocabulary. In vain did Mrs. Courtenay plead that morality was opposed to Dorothy's course. For each statement the daughter had an answer, and for each argument a counter one. It is not for me to say on which side lay the logic, but if sophistry was Dorothy's weapon it was effective against logic in her mother's hands. Mrs. Courtenay beaten, if not convinced, retired from the discussion of the moral aspect and addressed herself to the social, where she thought as she had a right, she was invincible, since she was a leader in forming social laws and customs. When she presented to Dorothy the fact that she could

not remain in her present relations without falling under the condemnation of society, Mrs. Courtenay imagined that she had presented the all-powerful argument, for she could not imagine happiness, much less existence, under such a condition. And on this point she pressed her daughter hard, bringing all her artillery to bear with practiced skill and great knowledge. Then suddenly up rose Dorothy and confounded her mother with a simple statement of fact, but, oh, how important and far extending in its consequences.

"Mother," she said, turning and turning her marriage ring, which she wore to the exclusion of all other rings, that it might be the more conspicuous, "this is the crisis of my life—the one great crisis of all my life, and I must look to myself selfishly. I know the swift condemning world will say that the course I am pursuing is not moral. But it will say so in ignorance. I refuse to sacrifice myself and my happiness to such ignorance. But whether I do or do not yield to its demand, the result is the same to me. It will ostracize me in either event. So it is for me to choose whether I will accept ostracism without happiness, or ostracism with happiness. I have chosen. That is all."

"But I deny that ostracism will be the result of this misfortune," exclaimed her mother, and then weakened her denial by adding, "that is, an ostracism we cannot in time overcome."

Dorothy turned to her mother a hallowed face, sanctified by such exquisite tenderness and sublime

love that her brown eyes were deepened into black—soft, lustrous black.

“Ah, mother, you do not understand. Could you present to your world the same girl Dorothy Courtenay was that day when she left her girl home for the last time, perhaps you might. Marriage is transformation. Dorothy Courtenay has passed away. She no longer exists.”

She rose from her seat, and twining her arms about her mother’s neck in the way Mrs. Courtenay remembered so well of old, said in a sweet low voice:

“And can Mrs. Herbert Courtenay, even, plead for the social position of a daughter, who by flying to her father’s home admits she is not a wife, yet who bears in her arms the evidence she should be? A life is quickening—a dear little, human life, and the crown of motherhood, is making ready for me.”

Oh, divine motherhood! Oh, the divine mother love—that silver cord, which draws all mother hearts together into the bonds of common sympathy. Forgotten the world and society, forgotten the pride of rank and the ambitions of caste, forgotten the splitting of moral hairs, in that precious moment when, impulse and affection taking sway, Dorothy found herself in her mother’s arms.

CHAPTER V.

CHANGING THE TACTICS.

IF confounded, Mrs. Courtenay was not dismayed. The knowledge which Dorothy had imparted, while it had drawn forth an unusual exhibition of sympathy and affection, did not in the slightest degree lessen Mrs. Courtenay's determination to effect a separation. Though appeals to Dorothy's womanly pride, social ambition, and moral sense had failed, other means, indirect, if needs be, must be employed. The task of bringing Dorothy to her senses, which had seemed so easy as she lingered over the breakfast table, in the effort was difficult. Sitting in the dainty boudoir of her daughter, she was conscious she had been repulsed in the first attack, and with the loss of some guns. Like the prudent general she was, she determined to withdraw from the field while she could do so safely, reform her lines, and with strengthened forces renew the attack.

A wrong would be done Mrs. Courtenay if she were not credited with an earnest desire to rescue her daughter from a life which she believed could not be other than doubtful and blameworthy—a desire based in sincere affection. That Dorothy

should leave Trescotte and endure a life of seclusion, simply because it was right for her to do so was firmly fixed in her mind, and if she had not been successful in impressing that idea upon Dorothy, her daughter had been no less unsuccessful in enforcing her contrary opinions. She felt that the right was with her and that, if she could not make Dorothy see it, the bishop could. If, in her arguments, she had mixed the moral with the social code, and had made ethics and society's opinions interchangeable terms, it was only because of her own peculiar education. But it must be admitted that she was greatly concerned as to the influence to be exerted upon her own social standing by the knowledge that one of her daughters was, in fact, living as a wife outside the legal bond of wedlock; the influence upon Hilda's contemplated marriage with Waldemar; upon the daughter who was to come out two years hence; and upon the son who had graduated at Harvard that summer, and who would enter society the coming winter. Dorothy, notwithstanding the misfortune which had befallen her, in her father's home, withdrawn from society, might be an object of sympathy, even of avoidance, but she would not be a reproach to the family, which she certainly would be were she to continue her relations with Trescotte.

When Mrs. Courtenay touched upon this phase of the question she made more of an impression upon Dorothy than she was aware. Had she

known how much, doubtless she would have dilated at length upon it, but as it was, she said enough to send Dorothy into weighing the duty she owed Trescotte against that which she owed her family. And so no conclusion was reached on either side—that is, that was accepted by the other. Mrs. Courtenay refused to receive as conclusive Dorothy's expressed determination to remain with Trescotte, and Dorothy refused to accept as conclusive, her mother's assertion that it was her duty to return to her father's house.

All the time this discussion was going forward Trescotte sat in the library making futile efforts to read the book in his hands. His thoughts constantly reverted to the sweet little woman above him going through the ordeal she had so much dreaded, and who was battling for the right to remain in companionship with him. He would gladly have taken this burden upon his own shoulders, but he knew that his presence would but increase her difficulties, and for the sake of her own future happiness with him, she must battle to the end, uninfluenced by him, or by any appearance of coercion on his part. As sad and heart-breaking as separation would be to him now, he yet felt that if there was a lingering doubt in Dorothy's mind as to the course she was pursuing, and if she could therefore be swayed and influenced by the appeals now being made to her, it were better for both of them that she should yield now. If she did not, and passed through the ordeal yet firm and staunch in her

determination, then he himself would be firmer in his own purpose. He therefore awaited the issue most impatiently.

Dorothy had asked her mother if she would see Trescotte, but Mrs. Courtenay declined, and with more bitterness than she had shown before in the interview, and took her leave promising Dorothy she would see her again in a short time.

Dorothy, seeking her husband upon her mother's departure, faithfully reported the interview and concluded with the opinion :

"Now that it is over and the ordeal I dreaded so much is passed, we may settle down and live our lives untroubled."

But Trescotte was far from satisfied that the end was reached. He thought he knew Mrs. Courtenay too well not to know that, desiring an end, she would not abandon the desire after only one attempt. And Trescotte was right.

One thing had been settled to Mrs. Courtenay's satisfaction : Dorothy's reason was as firmly seated as it ever had been. She told her husband so, but he was loath to let go his opinion, and urged that Dr. Balkin should be asked to see his daughter.

"Very well," acquiesced Mrs. Courtenay, "it will do no harm and something may come from it. The doctor is very fond of Dorothy and she of him. He may exert an influence her father and mother have failed to do."

She had yielded to her husband's urgency the more readily, because the visit of Dr. Balkin would

not interfere with the plan she had formed while talking with Dorothy.

"My dear," she said, addressing her husband who had taken his hat and was now searching for his gloves, "put your hat down and listen to me, I have something of importance to say to you."

The old gentleman replaced his hat and taking a chair sat down opposite his wife, remarking:

"To get Dorothy under treatment as soon as possible is of the first importance."

"Dorothy is as sane as you and I," replied his wife shortly. "And that will be Dr. Balkin's opinion. What is of the first importance is to separate Dorothy and Trescotte. And this must be done quietly. She will not leave him of her own motion; she will not now consent to leave him. We cannot seize her, abduct her, or kidnap her, nor can we appeal to the courts for her custody. All these methods would result in a public scandal, the thing of all things we must avoid. We have failed in pleadings, persuasions, and commands. Now, what are we to do?"

"Upon my word I don't know," answered the much-perplexed father.

"We must go to Buffalo," said his wife decidedly.

"Go to Buffalo?" asked the old gentleman, in sudden doubt as to his wife's sanity.

"Yes, to Buffalo," repeated Mrs. Courtenay, much pleased with the impression she had made, and the importance of her communication. "Buffalo is the place where that person Mr. Trescotte

married in Switzerland resides. She is the wife of Trescotte."

"Yes, most unfortunately; for if she were not Dorothy would be, beyond dispute."

"It is her duty to claim Trescotte as her husband and insist upon a home with him." Mrs. Courtenay narrowly watched the effect of her words upon her husband, but he was slow in comprehending her meaning.

"But, my dear, people, as we have evidence, do not always do their duty," he answered.

"She is evidently a person of very ordinary origin, and doubtless could be made to see her duty in the proper light," Mrs. Courtenay continued.

"Possibly, possibly," rejoined the old gentleman, very much in the dark, but having profound confidence in his wife.

"Of that grade which is struggling always for recognition from the upper classes, she undoubtedly will be very glad to secure a husband of Mr. Trescotte's rank in the social scale."

"She did not seem so very anxious eight or nine years ago, when she gladly left Trescotte for Adams," argued the husband, with a slight touch of humor.

"She was very young then, her head doubtless filled with romance—too young to fully realize the advantages of the connection she had made. Besides, she is abandoned by that man Adams, or did she abandon him? It is immaterial; they are apart."

"Well, granting all this, what do we secure by it?" asked Mr. Courtenay, who had been vainly striving to grasp the meaning of his wife.

"I am surprised at your dullness, Herbert. If she makes that demand Trescotte will be compelled to heed it; if she demands maintenance he must give it; if she demands care and protection, he must give both. She will be asking no more than the law gives her the right to ask, and he must yield."

"And still I cannot see what good that will do us." The old gentleman was still groping in the dark.

"Why, Herbert," cried his wife, "I'm quite impatient with you! Do you suppose that Dorothy, high-spirited Dorothy, would remain for one moment with a man who would thus acknowledge the existence of another wife? At present she is in some incomprehensible, exalted condition of mind that persuades her that she is a sacrificing martyr to love and duty. A woman having superior claims as a wife, visibly present, would bring her down from heaven to earth most rapidly, and send her home with speed."

"Great Heavens!" cried her husband, fairly startled by the boldness and originality of the plan. "You would not send her to Trescotte's house to live there?"

"To take possession as her right—to sit at the head of his table as is her right."

The old gentleman was aghast.

"Now," continued Mrs. Courtenay, *enthusiastic*

in her plan, "go to Mr. Magrane at once. Get the address of these people, and we will leave for Buffalo to-night."

"To-night?" Mr. Courtenay stared in astonishment at his wife; her energy compelled his warmest admiration.

"Yes, to-night. We cannot afford to delay in so important a matter."

Partaking of his wife's energy and enthusiasm, the old gentleman labored so zealously that the hour which usually found him dining leisurely saw himself and wife that night rolling rapidly toward that Queen City sitting at the gate of the Lakes.

CHAPTER VI.

PLANS THAT FAIL.

IF, in the contemplation of the plan she had evolved, and which she had traveled to Buffalo to execute, Mrs. Courtenay relied on the belief that the lady, "now known as Mrs. Adams," to use Mr. Magrane's phrase, would be open to the blandishments of the elegancies and luxuries of life, fine houses, and all the other things concomitant of wealth, she must have sustained a severe shock of surprise when she drew up in front of the Hallock residence.

As she was driven up that noble thoroughfare—one of the finest in all the States—Delaware Avenue, she had noted with wonder, and with that resentment we cockneys of New York are prone to feel when we see evidences of wealth and fashion elsewhere than in our own city, the many fine residences with spacious and well-kept grounds about them. But when the horses were suddenly swung from the street to a broad graveled road which wound through extensive grounds, embracing the entire square, in the center of which stood a building of pretentious architecture and imposing dimensions, with wide verandas, *porte*

cochère, spacious conservatories, the mere occupancy of which argued ample means, a large doubt as to the success of her enterprise took possession of her. She comforted herself, however, as she rang the bell, with the thought that wealth was not always, especially in these new cities, the assurance of social position and fine feeling.

If, as Mrs. Courtenay supposed, the Hallock family did not possess social position, it certainly had knowledge of those who did, for Mrs. Herbert Courtenay's card was recognized as that of one of society's brightest lights, and carried much wonderment as to the meaning of its presentation. Since the daughter of that house had, for a brief period, borne the name of the gentleman who was now the son-in-law of the lady presenting the card perhaps after all it is not singular that it was quickly recognized.

Mrs. Courtenay, sitting in the large reception room, admitting its superiority to her own, noting with critical eye the undoubted evidence of a keen and discriminating taste in its adornment, and arguing, thereupon, the possession of that quality by the inmates, thought that if she were not within and her husband without, in the carriage at the door she would gladly retire from an enterprise which the further she entered into it, seemed more and more doubtful. By and by there came to her a young woman not yet out of her twenties, appropriately and becomingly gowned, of winning presence, on whose face there were traces of trouble—

trouble that had chastened and refined, not hardened it. In a low and gentle tone she said in simple salutation :

"Mrs. Courtenay?"

"Mrs. Adams, I presume," replied Mrs. Courtenay, rising.

As the younger lady begged the older one to remain seated she took another chair herself. Mrs. Courtenay, to her extreme annoyance, felt embarrassed. This young woman was guilty of the bad taste of being diametrically the opposite of what Mrs. Courtenay had determined she was. Instead of being loud and aggressive, she was gentle and retiring; instead of possessing a flaunting and flamboyant handsomeness, her beauty was delicate and refined; instead of being a vulgar young person, she was ladylike, self-contained and self-possessed. Mrs. Courtenay's premises were all wrong; but she was in for it, and she went at her business much as Taurus goes at a red gate.

"I have come to you," she began, "on a matter deeply concerning our two families."

This coupling of the known Courtenay family with the unascertained Hallock family was intended to be conciliatory, but the air and tone of condescension spoiled the effect.

"Yes?" inquiringly replied the younger lady, intuitively feeling that the five months as Mrs. Trescotte, which had spoiled her domestic peace, was the matter.

"You may not be aware," continued Mrs. Courte-

may very graciously, "that last April my eldest daughter married Mr. Henry Trescotte?"

"Yes," Mrs. Adams replied readily, "I knew of it at the time. Surely," she suddenly asked, "Mr. Trescotte did not fail to acquaint you at the time of the other marriage?"

"Mr. Trescotte," said Mrs. Courtenay severely, impelled by a stern sense of justice, "informed my husband and my daughter before the engagement, and produced documents signed by you, Mr. Adams, your father, and mother, to the end that there was a previous marriage of yourself, but claiming it to be invalid."

The younger woman, with heightened color, arose, threw open a window, and handing a fan to the older one, returned to her seat, saying: "It is only what I would expect of so honorable a gentleman as Mr. Trescotte."

Mrs. Courtenay inferred from this remark that Mr. Trescotte was not regarded with enmity by Mrs. Adams, but rather held in respect. She hesitated to think what bearing this might have upon her intended proposition. Arriving at no conclusion she went on:

"May I ask—I do not mean to give offense—when did you last see Mr. Adams?"

Mrs. Adams, quickly suppressing the start the abrupt question caused, the color on her cheeks deepening, answered:

"A year ago, nearly; Mr. Adams has been on the Pacific Coast on professional business." Then

with some hesitation, she added : " I shall not conceal from you that we are living apart. The fact, however, is not public. The world thinks I am at my father's house during my husband's absence."

" I had so understood," remarked the elder lady dryly.

Mrs. Adams looked up surprised, pain plainly visible.

" You had so understood ? " she repeated.

" The knowledge is not general," Mrs. Courtenay hastened to assure the young lady. " It was communicated to us by our lawyer, who is also the lawyer of Mr. Adams."

" Lawyer ? " cried Mrs. Adams, much agitated. There was so much that was pathetic in her appeal to her visitor, that the older lady felt a wave of sympathy sweep over her, though she had been so disappointed.

" Mr. Adams does not intend to sue for divorce ? Oh, the shame of it ! "

The wave of sympathy was transitory and the older lady relentlessly pursued her point.

" There is no need of divorce proceedings."

" No need ? " wonderingly asked Mrs. Adams. " I do not comprehend you."

" I am sure, my dear Mrs. Adams, I do not want to shock you too much," said Mrs. Courtenay, dreading to reveal the fact, yet anxious to get it over that she might come to the point which was her concern. " I beg, my dear, you will prepare yourself for a revelation—which, while it may dis-

tress you, is by no means as bad as it will at appear. You know that every cloud has a——

"Mrs. Courtenay," cried the poor little distressed woman, "do have mercy and tell me what mean!"

Mrs. Courtenay, who thought she was approaching the subject with rare delicacy, was displeased that she should be hastened, and said abruptly

"Mr. Adams discovered some eight or months ago that the marriage of yourself to was not valid—that the magistrate who performed the ceremony had no authority."

Mrs. Courtenay regretted her abruptness as she saw the young woman fall back in her chair. She thought that Mrs. Adams had fainted and sprang up to call assistance, but the young woman by a plainly evident effort regained possession of herself and, rising from her seat, crossed the room and closed the doors.

"I have had so much trouble in my short life, I have been so unhappy," she said plaintively, "a little more cannot make much difference."

She came back to her chair and leaned once more back.

"So I was not married to George, after all," she mused, oblivious to the presence of the high society dame of society, and the world, and the fashion. "I have always feared that it was so. It did not seem like a marriage ceremony. I have lived with him eight years, the mother of three children, and yet not a wife!"

"But you are a wife!" exclaimed Mrs. Courtenay eagerly. The iron was now hot and she would hammer it.

The young woman, aroused by the eager exclamation, turned a bewildered face upon her visitor.

"The marriage with Mr. Adams not being valid, your subsequent one was, and you are in truth and in fact Mrs. Henry Trescotte!"

If Mrs. Courtenay was ambitious of dramatic effect she secured it. Mrs. Adams stared stupidly at her for a moment, reeled, nearly fell, and finally slipped down into her chair overcome. She waved away, however, the proffered assistance of the older lady, and bracing her back against her chair, her hands tightly clutching the arms of it, tried to grasp the tangle in which she was involved. Mrs. Courtenay, fearful lest she should not grasp the essential fact that she was Mrs. Trescotte, repeated the statement in various forms. But Mrs. Adams did not heed her; she was trying to think her way out of the confusion of her life. Suddenly an idea, clear and distinct, presented itself. "Then your daughter is not Mrs. Trescotte," she said almost sharply, turning upon Mrs. Courtenay.

"That fact is what has brought me to you."

Filled as she was with her own woes, yet she had room for sympathy for those of others. She rose, and going to the older woman, took the hand of Mrs. Courtenay in her own, and bending over her, whispered, "I am so sorry for you, so sorry for her. I will do whatever I can to help her."

"She has your place," returned the other; "she is occupying your rights."

At that moment there was a patter of running feet and the cry of "Mamma." The doors burst open and a handsome lad, dark-eyed and curly headed, ran in. He stopped abashed on seeing a stranger, and then shyly took the hand his mother held out to him.

Mrs. Courtenay stared at him with wide open eyes. The boy was Trescotte at that age over again, as she had known him when his mother was her most intimate friend.

"Is that your firstborn," she asked.

"My firstborn," replied the mother, looking down sadly yet tenderly upon the lad who lifted Trescotte's eyes to his mother.

"Then," said Mrs. Courtenay decidedly, "the more reason why you should claim your rights as Henry Trescotte's wife and take possession of them."

Mrs. Adams was confounded. She could not understand the other's words. She had supposed that the visit of Dorothy's mother was to plead with her in her daughter's interest, but she could not understand this urgency to put forward her claims as Trescotte's wife. She said so to the elder lady.

"Look at that child," was the reply. "He bears the proof of his paternity on his face."

The old, old trouble; the same charge; the same difficulty which had wrecked her married life. She

wound her arms about the handsome lad as if she would protect him from the blows she had received, and was receiving again.

"Look at the child," repeated Mrs. Courtenay, "and tell me if your duty is not to give him the father who is his father."

"I will not admit it," cried the harrowed mother, "and if it is true, there are two others which are not his."

This statement Mrs. Courtenay was not prepared for, and she had not an answer ready. But Mrs. Adams awoke to the singular attitude of her visitor. She knew that interest in her did not dictate it.

"Your daughter is living now with Mr. Trescotte?" she suddenly asked.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Courtenay.

"Does she love Mr. Trescotte?"

"Very deeply."

"Does Mr. Trescotte love her?"

"Unquestionably." Mrs. Courtenay thought if jealousy could be excited her purpose would be served.

"They are happy together?"

"They profess to be."

"Then why do you come to me?"

"Because the place she is occupying is yours."

"You are not frank. You want to separate them."

Mrs. Courtenay, confused by the sudden conclusion, admitted it.

"Since she is not the wife of Mr. Trescotte," she said, "her place is at home with me."

The purpose of her visitor was revealed great rush of thought the young mother saw thing bearing on the subject as with a single She was indignant.

"I see, I see!" she cried. "In order to go your own end you would use me. You want me to destroy his happiness and increase his misery. I will not do all now. She refuses to leave him, he refuses to let her go. Oh, yes, it is very plain now. As I would use me to force them apart. We will not do that. I refuse. Whatever trouble Mr. Trescotte is in is the result of a chivalrous effort to protect him from the consequences of a wild caprice of a mad woman. I respect Mr. Trescotte—honor him for his own honor. I will do nothing whatever to distress him. I will never, never claim him for a husband. I will not do that to you! I have lived eight years with another man. I love that man!"

"But you are not married to him; you are, Mrs. Trescotte," persisted Mrs. Courtenay, growing more firm as she saw her carefully constructed plan disappear into thin air.

"Ah, there are laws superior to those of man which man cannot alter or repeal—higher laws,"

"Consider Mr. Trescotte's position, his position and social station, and what he can do for you. You say you respect him——"

"Mrs. Courtenay," broke in Mrs. Adams, her face swelling with indignation. "Look about you. Here are the evidences of wealth and luxury that Mr. Trescotte can possess. I am accus-

to them. Social position? What is it? Recognition by and companionship with a few people who think themselves superior to others no less refined or cultivated than themselves. But enough; I refuse to discuss it. My position is hard, but I will not increase its bitterness with the consciousness that I have done aught to increase the distress of a gallant gentleman, who once sacrificed himself to save my honor."

Mrs. Courtenay listened to this with rising choler. She had felt from the beginning of her visit that she was in a false position, and now to hear her darling class flouted as if of no importance, and her proposition denounced as little less than dishonorable, was more than she could endure.

"You seem to forget," she said with an unmistakable sneer, "that dishonor is in the name of Adams, and escape from it in the name of Trescotte!"

"And you, madame," replied the other with gentle dignity, "forget that I am in my own house, hostess to you."

To receive a lesson in good manners was not the purpose of Mrs. Courtenay's visit to Buffalo. Very uncomfortable, she took her leave with the remark that she regretted that Mrs. Adams did not see her duty in the light others must.

The interview was so trying to her nerves that Mr. Courtenay found the next half hour very trying to him. During the course of this half hour Mrs. Courtenay informed her husband that she found

Mrs. Adams to be a very ill-bred person with shadowy notions of honor and morality.

Now, I submit that Mrs. Adams, who has always been rather a favorite of mine, was not—but there, of course if Mrs. Courtenay, the leader of the most exclusive sept of the most exclusive society of our city said it was so, why it does not become me to combat it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BISHOP TO THE RESCUE.

MRS. COURTENAY, much crestfallen, returned to New York. There was abroad such laxity of morals and loose disregard of obligations and honor, especially duty to society, that she was quite disgusted. What was the world coming to, if legally wedded wives declined to insist upon residence with their husbands, and laughed, as it were, at the superior advantages of society? Really, she would have to believe the statements of the vulgar dailies about the spread of socialistic, communistic, and anarchical ideas, which she had always supposed to be the mere vaporings of sensation mongers. After the experience of the past two days she was ready to believe anything. Here was her own daughter flying in the face of all settled principles, and actually asserting that her first duty was to secure her own happiness, regardless of all other things. And she was aided and abetted by Trescotte, whose breeding and traditions were no less immaculate. She might think that some dreadful heresy had crept into her own special order, and it alone, had she not found the same eccentricity in a lower class.

But disgusted as she was, and as well disappointed

in the failure of the plan which had taken her across the State, yet was her determination firm to rescue Dorothy from the false position she was in, if not for Dorothy's sake alone, then for that of the younger members of her family, whose futures were yet to be made. But how? Appeals to her daughter were useless; Mrs. Adams refused to interfere. Would she have to adopt her husband's theory, that Dorothy's mind was unsettled? It really began to look so. Could she only separate Dorothy from Trescotte on any pretext, and surround her with the proper moral atmosphere, she was quite certain she could make the separation permanent.

But Dr. Balkin, for whom she sent as soon after her return from Buffalo as she could, disposed of that idea.

"Why, Mrs. Courtenay," said that physician with his customary frankness, "if Dorothy is insane, it is a pity we all could not be touched with the same complaint. No one could be clearer-minded. She has wonderfully developed. Her troubles have strengthened her mind, not weakened it. Her health is superb. No physician or specialist having the slightest regard for his oath or his reputation would dare to do other than testify to her sanity."

"Do I understand you, doctor, to say that you justify Dorothy in the stand she has taken," asked the lady, not a little vexed by the doctor's decision of manner.

"That is a horse of another color," replied the

doctor, using one of those phrases that always jarred on Mrs. Courtenay, notwithstanding the respect she entertained for him. "The sanity, not the morality, of Dorothy is under question."

Mrs. Courtenay would like to have retorted that one could not exist in Dorothy without the other, but refrained, because the doctor always insisted on combating what he called error on the spot.

"But on that head," said he, looking at his watch to see if he had time to devote to the discussion, "I am forced to admit that Dorothy presents arguments you cannot answer satisfactorily to yourself. Of course, you can fall back on the truism that one should always do right for right's sake, irrespective of all other considerations. But, you see, Dorothy insists that she is doing right. She says that organized society in establishing the principle of monogamous marriages has builded so badly that, through its defects, the condition in which she and Trescotte find themselves is made possible, and she wants to know if, because of those defects, they are to be disgraced and punished? Upon my word, the answer is difficult. You see organized society says: Monogamous marriages are right; if you will accept the principle, we will guarantee to you protection in the enjoyment of your wife or husband, as the case may be; the control of your children; the possession of your property; and its succession as you desire it. It is a contract. Well, these two young people of ours enter into this contract with organized society and what do they find? Society

isn't able to carry out its part of the contract. Society has slipped a cog. What is the result? Jove, Trescotte turns up with two women, both of whom bear the relation of wives to him; Doro is wedded without a husband; Adams is wedded without a wife; children with one mother and different fathers; everybody innocent except the scamp of a civil magistrate—society's agent, who was removed by another of society's agents, having superior power, during his term of office, and who has exercised a function of power after that power has ceased to exist. Now asks Dorothy: Society's machinery having failed, and brought about this condition of things, why should she, because of her failure to which she in no way contributed, be punished with condemnation, ostracism, and separation; why should that child, yet unborn, be deprived of the care and protection of its father, the natural and proper guardian? Upon my word, Mrs. Courtenay, a better head than mine must answer he can't."

"But," argued Mrs. Courtenay, highly displeased, wondering that she had never noticed the vulgarity of the doctor before, "having discovered this deal with all its unhappy consequences, what right has Dorothy to live with a man who is another woman's husband?"

"There you are," cried the doctor, jumping from his seat, very much in earnest and pacing up and down the floor, making Mrs. Courtenay so uncomfortable that she was compelled to ask him for the fan lying

on the table. "There you are. That is where Dorothy fairly takes your breath away with her argument. She says practically, not in so many words, but to the same effect, that society, organized society, you know—the state, the law—having failed in its part of the contract in the marriage of Adams and that other woman, it cannot calmly disregard its failure, and insist upon the stability of the second because the first failed through the defects of its own machinery. Therefore, the marriage of herself, sanctioned by both church and law, must stand. In other words, society having made one failure must stand upon and end on that failure, and not go forward and make another failure in an attempt to repair the first."

"It is too finely drawn for me," said Mrs. Courtenay, fanning herself vigorously.

"It is the idea of intent she is getting at," interpreted the doctor, still very earnest. "Adams and the Hallock girl intended to get married; the state—organized society—intended to marry them. They thought they were married. Now, says Dorothy, the mere fact that the machinery of the state, provided by itself, broke down does not destroy the intent of these people. You say, perhaps, that Trescotte intended also to marry the Hallock girl, but it was an intent based upon the belief that she was an unwedded girl. The basis of the intent being false the intent does not exist. The girl intended to marry Trescotte, but she was falsely persuaded that she was not bound by the

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first marriage, and away goes her intent. And all this is granted when Adams is permitted to take repossession of the girl. Now, says Dorothy, it is not good sense nor good morals to change conditions existing eight years, because eight years after their establishment a defect in society's machinery is discovered."

"But will the world follow this extraordinary and very finely spun reasoning?" sneered Mrs. Courtenay, out of all patience with the doctor that he should see anything in Dorothy's fanciful logic.

"Possibly not," promptly returned the doctor. "The world is very ignorant and very obstinate." Then, as if thinking aloud, he added: "There are **no** conflicts of interest. Mrs. Adams does not want to go to Trescotte; Trescotte does not want her. Trescotte does not want Dorothy to leave him; Dorothy does not want to leave Trescotte. All there is of it is, that Dorothy's people want to take her home."

"And is not that what you would want to do if one of your daughters was in a similar position?" asked Mrs. Courtenay, bridling up quickly in her own defense.

"Yes," readily replied the doctor. "Just what I would want to do, for I am as much afraid of that great big bugaboo, society, and the world, as you are. But let us get back to business," he added as he took his hat and gloves and picked up his cane. "Dismiss all idea of Dorothy's insanity. You will only get into trouble if you pursue the idea further."

And the doctor went his way, leaving Mrs. Courtenay with a feeling of utter helplessness. She was forced to confess that she had been defeated in every effort to take Dorothy from Trescotte by methods that were not public. She thought, and with satisfaction, that as yet knowledge of the affair was confined to a small circle—a few friends who would not talk. And it was clear that before the knowledge crept out she must forward Hilda's wedding with all possible speed. It was to occur in October, but the date was not definitely fixed. That she must attend to as soon as Waldemar returned from Saratoga, by which time she hoped to bring about such complications as would prevent the possibility of a rupture. In the meantime she did not know but that it would be the better plan, since Dorothy would not leave Trescotte willingly, to devote her energies to keeping the truth a secret until after Hilda's wedding at least. The thought flashed over her mind that such plan would be a compromise with duty, and that involved in it would be the necessity of a seeming acquiescence in the relation Dorothy was maintaining. This troubled her. She could not discuss the question with her husband. If it were one relating to property, the organization of a stable, or the proper arrangement of a dinner, his advice would be of weight; but in this matter of a daughter who was married and yet not married, a wife and yet not a wife, he would be beyond his depth, and would suggest nothing better than insanity.

A happy thought struck her. The bishop was in town. She would call upon him. Ordering a carriage she was driven to the episcopal residence. She found the prelate in, and to him unfolded her woes. He was distressed, as a shepherd naturally would be when he heard that one of the lambs of his flock was so involved. He proposed that he should go to Dorothy at once, and under the mantle of his spiritual authority instruct her as to the course she should pursue, which, of course, was in the direction in which Mrs. Courtenay had been laboring.

While the good lady was willing, indeed anxious, that he should do so, still she was doubtful as to the outcome. What she wanted at that time was to be advised as to her own duty. For the sake of the great ends to be gained, could she give a seeming acquiescence to Dorothy's relations for a time?

Perhaps it was not flattering to the great lady, but the bishop's mind was more on Dorothy's position than that of her mother's. He required the story to be told him again, stopping its recital from time to time to inquire into points that were not plain. Finally, when he had the whole story in all its details, he paced up and down his study in deep thought, the while Mrs. Courtenay waited patiently.

"It is very distressing," he said, emerging from his thought. "I cannot see that Mr. Trescotte or Dorothy are in any way to blame, until, learning the truth, they determined to continue to live together. There is one view of this question which does not seem to have been considered by anyone of all those

you have consulted. I am somewhat astonished someone has not seen it—that it was left for me to suggest it—me, a churchman. There is such a thing as a marriage by civil contract. The Church holds marriage to be a holy sacrament, and abhors the civil marriage. But the law not only recognizes it, but provides for it by vesting authority to perform it in civil magistrates. It was this sort of a marriage that the man Adams and the woman Hallock thought they had made. Now, if I am not mistaken, the law in this State is still more liberal. The mere standing up publicly of the man and woman, each declaring before a witness that they propose to live together as man and wife, constitutes a valid marriage—a common law marriage, I believe they call it.”

Mrs. Courtenay, inclining her head in token of her comprehension of the bishop’s remarks, thought it was a very common marriage indeed.

“Now,” continued the bishop, “it is quite among the possibilities that the mere fact of Adams and this woman standing before a witness—this magistrate—and declaring their intentions to live as man and wife, may be interpreted as being a common law marriage, and if it were, the position of Trencotte and Dorothy would be much simplified.”

Mrs. Courtenay was delighted, and filled anew with admiration for the bishop, who, she had always declared, was the most delightful man of her acquaintance.

“Of course,” continued the bishop, “a competent

lawyer will advise you. I don't know just what would be necessary to establish the fact. Perhaps a divorce suit upon the part of somebody. Here I must stop, for embarrassment begins. I cannot and will not advise you as to this, because sacerdotal office forbids me. All I can do is to suggest the reference of the question to competent counsel. But I will go to Dorothy. She will refuse to talk to me, who has baptized, confirmed and married her."

Mrs. Courtenay left the bishop with a light heart. She was more than ever convinced of the "comfort of religion"; and without waiting to consult her husband was driven downtown, to the office of Magrane.

The bishop did go, and without delay, to Dorothy. Moreover he met Trescotte. The meeting was exceedingly pleasant to all concerned, though the bishop did set forth their duty as he saw it, as they did not, and as they frankly told him. Everybody was very polite. Dorothy was very glad to see the bishop and made him feel that he was. But pleased as he was, he left them with little belief in the efficacy of his own law, and much faith in that which he was certain Mrs. Courtenay would leave him to invoke.

CHAPTER VIII.

LAW SUPPORTS THE CHURCH.

WHEN the bishop's suggestion was put before Mr. Magrane, that gentleman thought possibly there was something in it. He wondered why it had not occurred to him. Yet he saw great difficulties in establishing the fact. A judicial determination could only be reached through a suit at law. And who would bring it? If Trescotte and Dorothy would sue each other for divorce perhaps the validity of the Adams-Hallock marriage could be brought in and determined, but if they were willing to proceed to such extraordinary means to establish the validity of their own marriage, the result must be that a huge scandal would be spread out for the public delectation, involving the sacred Courtenay family.

Mrs. Courtenay dismissed that idea summarily. Well, then, it was among the possibilities that Mrs. Adams might be persuaded to bring a suit against Mr. Adams for the support of her children, or abandonment, but the lawyer judged that to be very doubtful, in view of the lady's admission that she still loved Adams and desired nothing so much as a restoration of relations between herself and

Adams ; and (the lawyer was cautious of statement here) doubtless the lady had quite as much dislike for scandal as Mrs. Courtenay, and such a suit must inevitably bring out the incident of the five months with Trescotte. Of course Adams could bring suit, but to what end? To establish the validity of a marriage, which, as it stood now, to him was invalid, and re-impose obligations which he had shuffled off?

Looking at the matter from every side, and believing that there was, in fact, a common law marriage between Adams and Miss Hallock, Mr. Magrane was of the opinion that the best thing to do was to do nothing.


It was true that in the beginning Mr. Magrane had advised Mrs. Trescotte to leave her husband but that was before this phase of the situation had been presented. Upon consideration, he now believed that Mrs. Trescotte was legally married and he would advise that she remain with her husband. Of course, this advice was based upon the assumption of the validity of the common law marriage, which the more he thought of it, the more he was inclined to believe was valid. If anyone wanted to dispute the verity of the assumption then let that disputatious person undertake by legal process to prove its falsity and thereby play their game, but until someone did, Mr. and Mrs. Trescott were justified in acting on the assumption. It now seemed to him that Mrs. Trescotte's instincts had been true from the beginning, and that her position was

tenable, not, of course, upon the fanciful grounds on which she had founded her decision, but upon the more solid facts of the case. It was useless to think that this affair could be kept from the public. Knowledge of it would creep out in some form, and perhaps create doubt, if not misapprehension, as to the real relations, but that could not be avoided any more than the occasion of all the trouble could be disposed of. It was inseparable from the complication; the young people must go on as they were going, answering nothing, defending nothing, justifying nothing—keeping their own counsel.

This was by no means the outcome Mrs. Courtenay had expected. Her active imagination, projected into the next winter's season, saw the marital relations of her daughter the subject of unpleasant speculation at half the dinner tables, and all the teas, of her world, and she could see with what delight the matron mothers, envious because of the brilliant outcome of the Trescotte engagement at the time of the marriage, and the undoubted triumph of the Waldemar alliance, would roll the sweet morsel over and over on every opportunity, and she winced under it. But what other course was there to pursue? She would not escape this gossip if Dorothy were to separate from Trescotte. The advice of Mr. Magrane justified acquiescence in a continuance of the relation until after the Waldemar nuptials, and during the intervening time she hoped that secrecy could be maintained; indeed, she believed it could be.

So she left the lawyer, determined upon her policy and that was to say nothing in her family, or to her friends, implying a doubt as to the regularity of the Trescotte marriage, and if anyone was presumptuous enough to speak of it within her hearing, she would summon to her aid all that arrogance which she knew so well how to use. Surely, she thought, she was riding up town, the families of the Courtenays and the Van Allens, with their powerful connections, were potent enough to force a respectful recognition of Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte. Mr. Bancroft had forced the acceptance of his daughter when her name had been compromised in its association with Tom Handysides, even though Mrs. Handysides had gone to the length of beginning a suit for divorce. Surely she could do as much. And the beginning of the effort was to be found in refusal to admit the possibility of a doubt of the integrity of the Trescotte relation.

By the time this conclusion was reached so very late in the hotel at which she and her husband were stopping. For a lady, certainly not less than forty-years-old, accustomed to the most dignified leisure and to the extreme of luxury, the three days since she had left home had been of unexampled industry. Excitement and her natural energy had kept her up. Although she was beginning to feel the effects of her labors, she had yet more business for the day. Her husband was anxiously awaiting her arrival. When he was immediately thrown into confusion by the rapid change of front of his wife. When he



saw her she was apparently hopeless. Now she was in high glee, declaring everything was all right. This whirling about and unsettling things that had been settled was very irritating. It had been difficult for him to understand how Dorothy had become unmarried; it was no less difficult for him to comprehend how, having been unmarried, she should have become suddenly married again. But he accepted the fact, as he did most things from his wife, and to her satisfaction took fast hold of the essential, that there must be no admission of a doubt that Trescotte and Dorothy were truly man and wife.

After a lunch hastily taken, Mrs. Courtenay, bidding her husband to make arrangements for their return to Newport that evening, prepared herself for two calls.

One on the bishop to inform him of the result of her conference with Mr. Magrane, and to obtain, if possible, his approval of the policy she had determined upon, and thus remove all lingering doubts as to its morality. The bishop was highly pleased with the turn of affairs. He could see, he said, little, if any, difference between a common law marriage and one performed by a civil magistrate. Neither, as all marriages should be, was a holy sacrament. Therefore, if so high an authority as Mr. Magrane was satisfied that a common law marriage had been contracted by Mr. Adams and the woman who now bore his name, then surely Mr. Trescotte and Dorothy were in precisely the same

position as they all supposed they were on the he had married them—truly and lawfully wedde

Much delighted, and with all burdens lifted from her conscience, Mrs. Courtenay went to her second call—to Dorothy. This time she saw Trescott for all bitterness had passed away and she was prepared to take him into the sunshine of her favor as her son-in-law. We are all of us prone to believe earnestly what we sincerely desire to believe. It was therefore not to be wondered at that, having Magrane's opinion and the bishop's approval, Courtenay was persuaded that there was not the least flaw in the marriage title of her daughter and whatever trouble there was, was due to the very stupid discovery of Mr. Adams, and that Trescott and Dorothy had been very badly treated. So improved was the condition of her mind that as she waited for response to her bell, she looked on with critical delight the equipage waiting to take Dorothy for her afternoon's drive, perfect in its tail, from the superb horses to the motionless driver, a man with folded arms standing at the door of the coach.

When Dorothy, who had been anticipating another assault from her mother after the call of the doctor and the bishop had justified her mother's band's predictions, learned the purpose of her mother's call, she was greatly delighted. Perhaps she cried a little over the satisfaction she found in the assurance that she was a wife in name as well as in fact. And there was no less satisfaction in

assurance that there would be no rupture of family ties. She had foreseen such rupture, and while determined to endure it rather than part from Trescotte, yet she had grieved over it in secret. Trescotte suspected that this was the reason for the shade of melancholy he had seen flit over her face when her father's or mother's name was mentioned, and he was highly pleased with Mrs. Courtenay's news, assurances, and change of temper.

"I was much distressed," said Mrs. Courtenay very affably, "when I first heard the story. The only thing I hold against Mr. Magrane is that before making us all so uncomfortable he did not examine the case in all its bearings. You see it is only because of my persistent efforts in your interest, my dear children, that the truth was forced to the surface. Surely you have had evidence of my affection for you."

And Trescotte, anxious to believe anything which would increase the happiness of his beloved Dorothy, assured his mother-in-law that he had never been in any doubt of that affection.

"Is it not singular," asked Mrs. Courtenay, swelling with pride and really believing that she had rescued the pair from some calamity, "is it not singular that it should have been the bishop who suggested this happy solution? You should both hold him in great esteem and affection."

"We do," responded Trescotte, very grateful, now that he saw the old happy light dancing in the dark eyes of Dorothy. "We'll have him to dinner. His

family is away and his household must be ordered."

A strict regard for veracity compels me to note that Mrs. Courtenay said nothing about her hurried trip to Buffalo, and her endeavor to persuade Mr. Adams to set up claims to Trescotte as a husband. It really was of no importance in view of the turn affairs; it would have only complicated matters and it is doubtful whether her motives would have been understood without a good deal of explanation.

When it was time for her to return to her home her own hired carriage was dismissed, and she drove back in that splendid equipage which had so excited her admiration, with Trescotte and Dorothy, and at the hotel there was a happy meeting with the father in which the last vestige of bitterness was swept away.

Mrs. Courtenay advised, and Mr. Courtenay urged, that the Trescottes should close their country house and visit Newport. The elder lady feared that the eccentricity of an open house in the summer months would excite remarks, something at that juncture to be avoided. Trescotte urged, in response, that the closing of it again after opening for two weeks would excite quite as much remark and being sustained by Dorothy, declined, saying that he was quite willing that the world should believe him "spoiled" on his wife, and of inventing a new way of spending the honeymoon.

Trescotte had a better and more profound rea-

than he had seen fit to express. He was by no means certain that their problem had been solved in this simple and direct manner. And he did not care to expose Dorothy to the dangers and humiliations should their story become known while they were in Newport. And he knew his Newport too well not to know what it would do if opportunity were given it.

Mrs. Courtenay, wearied yet happy, returned with her husband to Newport to resume the weary grind of society's treadmill, and Dorothy and Trescotte to the house with windows opening on Central Park, to live their lives in their own ways, far happier than they had yet been, for the sunshine is always brighter after the black storm clouds have rolled away.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

BOOK III.—OSTRACISM.

CHAPTER I.

A CRITICAL POINT.

THE wedding of Hilda and Waldemar took place in October, and the two young people crossed to Germany, carrying forward one of Mrs. Courtenay's most cherished plans.

Dorothy and Trescotte were not present. A jewel of large value represented them. At the time their absence was not noticed. It was not until it was all over that someone recollected and commented upon the fact that Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte were present at neither the ceremony at the church, nor at the reception at the house. Then busy tongues wagged.

In the months intervening between the great discovery of the common law marriage, over which Mrs. Courtenay so plumed herself, and the marriage of Hilda, over which Mrs. Courtenay so triumphed, the lives of Dorothy and Trescotte flowed along on pleasant and happy lines. Life was perfect to

Dorothy. The birds sang in her heart a cheerful refrain that found an echo in her voice. Weather-beaten as I am by time, and the storms it brings and realizing, as I must, how hollow are the joys, ambitions, and pomps of life, yet never could I look upon that happy face and those shining eyes, lifted with such sublime faith and confidence to Trescotte in those days, without a responsive thrill and a slipping back into the old superstition that there were such things as joy and happiness. Trescotte, too, in those days seemed no less happy, though he has since confessed to me that there was then the alloy of apprehension. Having little faith in the common-law marriage, which he believed to be a mere subterfuge to quiet consciences anxious to be quieted, he feared that when society returned to the city Dorothy's real ordeal would be reached. Supported by the powerful influences of the Courtenay and Van Allen, the Trescotte and McNish (his mother's) families, together with the approval of the bishop who had dined half a dozen times with them, he was willing to believe that their social position could be made secure. The trouble, in his estimation, was the concentration of those powerful interests. Divisions and jealousies existed, and there were branches of each family quite ready to rise in revolt against other branches of the same family. Did not the wife of the nephew of Herbert Courtenay dispute the right of Mrs. Courtenay to lead in society? And did she not insist, in view of the fact that her husband was the eldest son of the eldest son, at

cetera, upon her right to engrave on her cards "Mrs. Courtenay," a privilege Mrs. Herbert Courtenay arrogated? While all these various and sometimes hostile divisions were ready to combine to repel the invader, apparently they always were willing to take up arms against one of their order if the contest was to be waged within society's circle. Trescotte feared that a contest in which Mrs. Courtenay should be the leader would only result in insult and humiliation for Dorothy. For himself he cared nothing at all; it was Dorothy and Dorothy's happiness that was upon his mind.

Trescotte often discussed this question over the wine with Mr. Magrane. The lawyer had become a frequent guest at the Trescotte table. The cook was excellent and the wines superb. And he had grown to be very fond of the two young people. While Trescotte could not be satisfied that the world would accept the common law marriage as a solution of their troubles, Mr. Magrane could do no more than assert his positive opinion that it must stand in law, if they could only bring it under judicial review. They never got beyond these propositions, but the subject had an irresistible attraction for them, and they returned to it frequently when Dorothy had left the table.

The real result of all this thinking and discussion upon the subject was, that Trescotte persuaded himself that the course he and Dorothy should pursue was that of self-imposed isolation; to refuse to accept invitations and to give none. If these peo-

ple, learning all there was to be learned, condemned their position, at least the charge of forcing them selves upon society in its ignorance of those relations could not be maintained against them. By this course also Dorothy could be preserved from slights and humiliations. Fully persuaded as he was as to the wisdom of this course, yet he shrank from telling his doubts and fears to Dorothy in the high tide of her happiness.

But the time for the Hilda-Waldemar wedding approached. During the weeks preceding the wedding, after the Courtenay family had returned from Newport, the Trescotts had frequently dined at Dorothy's old home, and the various members of her family had been frequent visitors at her table. To all this Trescotte had submitted without protest although he had been worried over sitting at the table with Waldemar. It was not because he was in any doubt as to the moral standard of Waldemar. He knew only too well that that easy-going young gentleman had dined at many tables the female grade of which was a purchasable quantity, and often he had the hardihood to leave his own drag at the races to converse over carriage doors with beauties more notorious for the publicity of their lives than the circumspection of them. But he also knew the peculiar code governing young men of the Waldemar breed, and that they not only demanded from their wives the most spotless escutcheon, but the same from all of the female persuasion who belonged to them. The possible cloud upon the Trescot

marriage title had never been mentioned in the Courtenay family, and of it Hilda was as ignorant as Waldemar.

But with the wedding came the necessity for action. The question was, should or should they not present themselves at the ceremony and the reception. Trescotte laid it before Dorothy, thereby greatly distressing her. If her father and mother and the bishop were satisfied as to the integrity of their relations, why should not the world be? Her husband told her all his doubts and apprehensions. It was like beginning all over again. Dorothy had rested so secure that revival of this question was almost as much of a shock as the revelation had been. However, she comprehended that all of Trescotte's concern was for herself, and that sweetened the bitterness of it.

The end of the conference was the conclusion that self-imposed isolation should be the policy, and to this conclusion Dorothy came uninfluenced by Trescotte, who contented himself with laying his apprehensions before her, asking her to reason it out for herself, promising to abide by any decision she might come to.

That is why they were represented by an expensive jewel at the wedding.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. DEEKMAN'S DINNER.

THE wisdom of Trescotte was soon made manifest.

Society had not long settled into its autumn routine before a whisper went its rounds that there was something wrong in the Trescotte marriage. No one knew just what it was, but whatever it was, was wrong. The facts, that the Trescotte's had opened their city house in mid-summer instead of herding with their kind on mountain and seaside, and that they were conspicuous by their absence at the Waldemar nuptials, were put in evidence, and people were left to draw their own conclusions. And people, not certain what conclusions they should draw, nevertheless concluded things were very bad. It is a charming quality of human nature that we always take the most pessimistic view of our neighbor's affairs. By and by the whisper took the more definite form of assertion that it had been discovered that Trescotte had a wife, other than Dorothy, hidden away these many years, who, learning of the Courtenay alliance, refused to be longer placated with money. Then this was followed up with the positive statement that all of

this had been known to the Courtenays from the beginning, yet, as the wife was a low Swiss girl back in the mountains of her native country, and the marriage was contracted before Trescotte was of age, it had been supposed nothing would be heard of it to discomfort anybody. But now the whole Swiss family, with peaked hats from which fluttered gay ribbons, with short velvet jackets with many buttons and cross bars of many metal laces, had suddenly appeared in the city prepared to push the rights of the Swiss Mrs. Trescotte to the extreme.


And while society gossiped and wondered, Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte lived their own lives in their own way. Self-imposed isolation is what they called it. A figure of speech, however. They rode in the Park, and none on the Boulevard created more envy than they did when the famous hackneys swept along, arching their necks and throwing their knees up and down with the precision of piston rods. At the fall regattas the yachtsmen had admired the fine lines of *The Decision*, and noted with applause that, like a true sailor, Mrs. Trescotte took her "trick" at the wheel. Their faces were to be seen at all the first nights, and the Trescotte box at the Music Hall was as eligibly situated as the heaviest subscriber to the symphony concerts ought to be. Moreover, there were current stories of dinners given to people famous in the arts and sciences, and *musicales*, which, if known in advance, would have led to more intrigue and diplomacy for admission than would have sufficed for three changes

of the map of Europe. Surely self-imposed isolation under these circumstances was only a figure speech.

About the time the marital relations of the Treccottes began to be talked about openly, Mrs. Deeman gave a dinner. This lady had three daughters still in stock, and had at one time entertained great hopes of both Treccotte and Waldemar.

From the moment I learned that not one of Courtenay or Treccotte connections were bidden and that Mr. Magrane was, I had a wicked suspicion that the dinner was a bit of social diplomacy to get at the truth of the Treccotte affair. My suspicion was confirmed when, long before champagne, Mrs. Beestonmy, sworn crony of Mrs. Deekman, started the ball. A mention of the mystery was required to set the tongues in motion. All old insinuations were repeated, and "Airy" Shebeau to the matrons present when they were young and still beau to their daughters, detailed minutely the Swiss family story. So much attention did he receive, something unusual in his experience, he was tempted to flights of fancy involving an interview with the paternal Swiss, but was deterred by something in the eyes of Tracey Harte, who watched him steadily.

"How nice," commented Mrs. Trevor-Allen when "Airy" Sheffer had completed his tale. "Why does Mr. Treccotte hesitate? I dote on him. From that moment when my nurse took me to a Swiss family of bell ringers, who made s



lovely music by striking bells with a little stick, I have had but one serious ambition in life, and that is to be on terms of intimacy with a bell ringer. If Mr. Trescotte will acknowledge this Swiss bell ringing wife, I'll be her dearest friend."

Mr. Magrane, who was the lady's *vis-à-vis*, and who was meeting her for the first time, addressed her across the table, his eyes twinkling with humor:

"You do not believe the Swiss family story?"

"Believe it?" she cried. "Oh, I must. My great desire to have a Swiss bell ringer in our set compels me, and then Mr. Sheffer tells it, and he has never been known to spread a story the truth of which he has not fully investigated—have you, Mr. Sheffer?"

The appeal was made with such sweetness and confidence that "Airy" lost a little of that airiness which had made the pun on his name possible, and replied, quite red in the face:

"If I had had the honor of your closer attention, Mrs. Trevor-Allen, you would have heard me say that I did not vouch for the truth of the story, but that it was current talk."

"How disappointing," exclaimed the lady. "I am afraid my ambition is not to be gratified. Besides, if Mr. Sheffer's tale falls to the ground, what guarantee have we that the whole Trescotte gossip does not go down, too? There is a legal maxim to that end, is there not, Mr. Magrane?"

Mr. Magrane laughingly assured the lady that her information was correct.

"Then the whole story about there being any-

thing wrong is all rot, isn't it?" asked Tracey H. who was invited because Mrs. Trevor-Allen said, "Well, I'm glad of it."

"Tracey," remarked the irrepressible young woman, in a tone which could be heard only by one she addressed, and Mr. Magrane, very attentive upon her, "you positively must learn how to love. The way you dispose of our latest and sweetest morsel of scandal is too charming."

"I never did believe in the Swiss family story," boomed a voice like a fog horn at sea, down the table. It belonged to Mr. Starkhite, a solemn-faced bachelor sitting in the seat of honor on the right of Mrs. Deekman.

"Nor I, either," put in Mrs. Deekman, who felt the conversation was taking a tack which would leave the subject aside. "But the story of a marriage in Switzerland has more substance, I think."

"Oh, my bell ringers yet. Do give it to me," cried Mrs. Trevor-Allen.

It was singular that, in view of the fact that Mrs. Trevor-Allen was so irritating, she should be invited everywhere.

"I don't understand your adherence to bell ringers," Mrs. Trevor-Allen, loftily replied Mrs. Deekman.

"Why, do not all the Swiss ring bells?" asked the young woman with great innocence. "If they do, they are nothing to me. Mr. Trescotte's affairs interest me if he is not to have a Swiss bell ringer for a wife."

Mr. Magrane, taking no part in the conversation,

but watching his *vis-à-vis*, thought she was adopting ingenious means to end a conversation distasteful to her.

"One would suppose," said Mrs. Beestonmy very heavily from her side of the table, "that the peculiar position of poor Mrs. Trescotte would excite not only your interest but your sympathy, Mrs. Trevor-Allen."

"Ah," replied that young lady with a very dangerous baby stare, "to which do you refer? The Swiss—I won't say bell ringer again, Mrs. Deekman—the Swiss Mrs. Trescotte or the New York Mrs. Trescotte?"

"I think there can be no question as to which I mean—the Mrs. Trescotte who has been brought up among us," replied Mrs. Beestonmy, with the air of one who had sat heavily upon an offender.

"Oh, yes," responded Mrs. Trevor-Allen, not at all abashed by the fact that all the conversation at the table was suspended to listen to the covert duel. "So I should, and for poor Mrs. Courtenay, too. We all of us will be so distressed if it turns out that one of the matches she made with such skill, defeating us all, and for which we all envied her so much, should turn out to be a fluke, won't we, dear Mrs. Deekman?"

Mrs. Deekman was slow in responding to this thrust. So also was Mrs. Beestonmy, and before either of them could convince themselves of the sarcasm of their intended replies, Tracey Harte broke in :

"I don't believe there is anything wrong at all. It's just gossip started because Trescotte and his bride wanted to enjoy their honeymoon in a ration manner—downright, malicious gossip, I call it."

"Positively, Tracey, you are becoming dangerous," whispered Mrs. Trevor-Allen. "The visible Mrs. Trescotte of doubtful relation would be sacred to you. But as a bride, concerning whose status there is no doubt, she will become the object of your later adoration. You are very wicked!"

"Mr. Harte wicked? Impossible!" simpered Miss Alliger, a young lady approaching the age of certain, who sat upon Tracey's other side.


"Positively wicked!" repeated Mrs. Trevor-Allen. "He would destroy the only pleasure left us poor matrons—the comforting consolation of well-related gossip."

"I do not consider it gossip," remarked Mrs. Beestonmy, lugging in her artillery. "Here is a serious question. Has Mr. Trescotte one wife or two?"

"Oh," cried Mrs. Trevor-Allen, "if you put it that way, all my sympathy will have to be for Mr. Trescotte."

Mrs. Beestonmy shot a stern look at the irresponsible young matron and continued: "If he had a wife when he married poor Dorothy, then he would have posed on the poor creature."

"I thought it was the settled belief of us married women that we were all imposed upon—our natural condition, as sparks fly upward," again put in the young woman.



Mrs. Beestonmy undertook to subdue Mrs. Trevor-Allen by ignoring her, and continued :

"But we are told that Dorothy knew of the previous marriage before she was engaged. That being so, we have a duty to ourselves, our friends, and society to perform."

"Duty with a big D, I suppose," remarked the young woman with an approving nod.

"We should know the truth, and condemn such relations deliberately entered into!"

"But then the bishop sanctioned the marriage," sweetly remarked the other.

"In ignorance of the facts," said Mrs. Deekman loftily.

"Ah, yes," answered Mrs. Trevor-Allen. "But since they opened house he has dined with the Trescottes six several and distinct times. Is that explicit and legal, Mr. Magrane?"

The lawyer bowed, his eyes dancing. He opened his lips to speak, but Mrs. Deekman was replying:

"It may be true, yet you may rest assured that the bishop knows nothing of the story."

"Pardon me," broke in Mr. Magrane, speaking for the first time. "The bishop knew all there was to know, without reservation, before he visited the Trescotte's the first time."

The remark was like the dropping of a bomb-shell. Nearly all at the table knew that Mr. Magrane occupied the relation of counsel to Mr. Trescotte, and therefore spoke with authority. Silence followed his remark. It was Mrs. Trevor-

Allen who broke it, and in so doing voiced the sentiments of all.

"Oh," she cried, "there is something, then! Do tell us?"

Her question had an effect contrary to her expectation. Thoroughly convinced that there was nothing in the gossip, she thought they had arrived at a point when she could compel Mr. Magrane to give it its quietus.

"Mrs. Trevor-Allen," replied the lawyer with a quizzical expression, "a lady so intimately acquainted with legal maxims and legal phraseology, as you appear to be, must also know that a counsel is something like a father-confessor—secrets he must lock in his breast."

"Oh, dear," cried the lady, "the more disappointing you are, the more interesting you become. How cruel! You see us here, our appetites whetted for gossip, and you refuse us bread!"

Before he could reply the deep voice of Mr. Starkhite boomed down the table. This time he was permitted to finish his sentence.

"I never did believe in the Swiss family story, but I am certain the story of a previous marriage in Switzerland is true. It was an American girl he married."

This was another bombshell. Mrs. Trevor-Allen looked to Mr. Magrane to reply. In fact all did; but it was not his intention to discuss his client's affairs.

The silence became oppressive, and it was again



Mrs. Trevor-Allen who broke it, and with a question to the lawyer.

"Are you a friend of Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte?"

"I am more—I am their counsel."

There was strong emphasis on the word "their."

Booming over the table came the deep voice of Mr. Starkhite again:

"I have known this for a number of years. The fact was told me by the lady's father. I presume she is dead."

Again all looked to Mr. Magrane, but he was busy with the ice with which he had just been served.

"Or she may have been divorced?" queried Mrs. Deekman.

Still Mr. Magrane did not reply. Mrs. Trevor-Allen, addressing Tracey Harte, said, with the hope her words would reach Mr. Magrane:

"Here is a case where silence is more harmful than speech."

The lawyer heard them and shot a significant glance at the fair lady. "I believe Mr. Starkhite's information to be entirely correct," he said impressively. "To discuss a client's affairs, even at a private dinner table, is a breach of faith upon the part of counsel, as any lawyer will say. Lest, however, my silence shall give color to the gossip that there is something reprehensible in the relations of Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte, I will say, I *believe* Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte to be lawfully and truly married. That also, is the opinion of the bishop, who proves his faith by dining with them."

The peculiar emphasis Mr. Magrane gave to the words, "I believe," was unfortunate, since it, at least, confirmed the belief that there was something strange about the Trescotte relations, and that if he and the bishop believed them to be right, he acknowledged there was something people could take an opposite side upon. And the majority of those present were anxious to take the opposite side, if there was an opposite side to take. The discussion at the table, however, passed away, with one more attempt upon the part of Mrs. Beestonmy :

"Then if this is so," she asked, "why do these young people keep themselves aloof from society?"

"I am counsel to them," said Mr. Magrane with severe dignity, to the open delight of Mrs. Trevor-Allen, "on matters of law. I do not counsel them as to matters of society."

Before Mr. Magrane took his leave, which he did shortly after joining the ladies, Mrs. Trevor-Allen said to him :

"I have been thinking what an uncomfortable time you have provided for the bishop."

"I? How?"

"By telling us gossip-loving matrons that he knows all about the Trescotte affair."

"I'm sorry for that. I'll warn the bishop."

"Do. No one who can snub us so artistically as the bishop when he is prepared. And, Mr. Magrane, tell him that if he ever was the friend of Dorothy Trescotte now is the time when he must prove it."

"Of course I'll obey your command, but I don't understand."

"Since we left the table we have decided that there is something improper, and so we are going to send Dorothy to Coventry."

"I see."

The eyes of the lawyer expressed a great deal of admiration for the young woman, who, if incomprehensible to many, was not to him.

"Oh, by the way, Mr. Magrane, can you give me the number of Mrs. Trescotte's house?"

Mr. Magrane laughed outright as he gave it to her.

"You propose to begin to send her to Coventry by calling upon her," he said.

"I like to be first in whatever I undertake. Mr. Magrane, I receive on Tuesdays. I'll be pleased to see you."

Mr. Magrane bowing his thanks, left her, wondering where Mr. Trevor-Allen was, whether she was a widow, and what that wicked old Trevor-Allen, with his mint of money and thousands of acres, was to her, little dreaming that the vivacious and winsome woman was the wife of the sordid, wicked old man.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. TREVOR-ALLEN'S INTRIGUE.


THE Deekman dinner gave impetus to the Trescotte scandal. It had served its purpose, and justified its expense. What had previously been suggested in ambiguous phrase was now expressed in plain terms. The Swiss family myth passed away under Mr. Magrane's admission that Mr. Starkhite's information was accurate, but involved in the admission was the certainty of something mysterious in the Trescotte affair, which must, therefore, be reprehensible. It was so asserted, at all events, in club parlors as well as those of private mansions. Mr. Magrane's caution had not helped the Trescotts. His tone and manner, while asserting his belief in the legality of the marriage, had carried conviction of a doubt to those anxious to entertain a doubt.

The bishop was much harrassed because of his possession of the secret, but, as Mrs. Trevor-Allen had said, he was an adept in the art of snubbing. He dismissed inquiries with the remark that since the Church, which was himself, and the law, which was Mr. Magrane, were satisfied with the existing relation, it was no concern of the world, which was

Mrs. Deekman and Mrs. Beestonmy and their followers. But the bishop's reticence *only* added fuel to the flames.

Echoes of the gossip reached Mrs. Courtenay, and she thanked her stars that Hilda was safely married. But she vowed vengeance and warfare upon those instrumental in spreading the gossip. When she heard of the Deekman dinner and the movement to ostracize Dorothy, she determined to show that she could bite. Mrs. Deekman and Mrs. Beestonmy learned that she could, and very hard, too, for at the annual meeting of the crack charity society, a seat in the directory of which was passport to the inner circles of society, these two ladies found the seats which they had only achieved the previous year filled by two friends of Mrs. Courtenay. They were under no misapprehension as to the cause of their reverse, and regarded it as a declaration of war, and vigorous war it would have been could Mrs. Courtenay have persuaded Trescotte to consent to a reappearance in society.

Dorothy realized that Trescotte's fears were not without foundation when she found that certain people who had formerly smiled sweetly upon her, who had stepped out of their way to be nice to her, now discovered something of interest in the opposite direction when they met her. Of course all this hurt her, but she dismissed it philosophically. But she was to undergo one ordeal she had not expected. She attended an afternoon symphony concert at the Music Hall. Something had pre-



vented Trescotte from accompanying her, and she was alone. As she passed through the lobbies crowded with those who a month previously would have made her passage one of delay and difficulty by their salutations, she could not observe a single welcoming or friendly face. Upon the contrary, acquaintances looked over her head, and old friends turned their backs upon her. Stung to the quick as she was, her pride and lofty spirit served her well. If there was heightened color in her face, there was regal haughtiness in her manner. She swept through the mass of skirts with a superb arrogance that would have delighted her mother, and wrung the heart strings of her husband, for he would have known what it had cost her to carry herself so bravely. This was the culmination of the slight and humiliations, and she knew now she had been sent to Coventry. Of course she had expected it; she had steeled herself for it ever since that day when the revelation was made, but it was so much harder to bear than she had thought it would be. It is all very well to sit in the quiet of your chamber and defy the world. It is very easy, then. But when you feel its contempt, what a different thing it is! How large the world is then, and how small you are!

Mrs. Trevor-Allen observed Dorothy's passage by her box. Her point of observance was too remote to have permitted her to have saluted Dorothy, but she had desired to do so. But she clapped her hands together lightly several times, causing an

tendant squire to ask if she was indulging in a preparatory canter for applause in the box.

"No," replied the incomprehensibility, "I am merely relieving my overcharged feelings. I am delighted with the delicious way I have been snubbed."

"You have been snubbed?" inquired the youthful admirer, looking around very fiercely as if he would resent the snubbing.

"Yes; I, as one of my order," replied the vivacious young matron. "But don't endanger your mind by trying to understand me. On the contrary, find Tracey Harte for me. I will remain here."

"Am I, then, to be dismissed?" dolefully asked the youth.

"No. You shall attend me to my box, but Tracey must do something for me."

The young adorer of young married women was easily found. What Mrs. Trevor-Allen wanted him to do was evidently a secret, for she took him aside to communicate her commands. Moreover, it was something at which he rebelled, for he replied aloud:

"But, my dear Mrs. Trevor-Allen, my mother and sisters have gone that way, too."

"Ah, charming!" said the lady with the most insolent drawl she could assume. "And you have such ideas as they will permit you to have! I make it a point to select as my friends, men. I shall regret to know that your visits upon me have ceased."

No man can endure the contempt of the woman he admires. Tracey Harte wilted.

"Your threatened punishment is too great!" he cried. "I yield."

She gave him her hand, and with it the ravishing smile a woman, who has won a victory over that poor thing called man, always bestows as a healing balm, and whispered :

"You are learning to make love, Tracey."

Then she gave her arm to the youth who had been patiently waiting for her, as Tracey, a good deal troubled, turned from her. But at the moment she saw an arrival which filled her with joy and surprise. The arrival was the Countess Malcolm—her dearest friend, the playmate of her child days, the confidante of her girl hours, the partner of her pranks, and the participant in all her escapades, whose bridesmaid she had been when the Earl of Malcolm was wed. With an abandon which would have been deemed vulgar in a daughter of the people, she flung her arms about the American graft upon English stalk, to be received with the same effusiveness. Out of the whirl of kisses and "When did you comes," and "How long have you been heres," the fact appeared, that, contrary to the generally accepted notion, the Earl of Malcolm had an idea, which was music. Though their yacht had only arrived in port during the previous night, the earl, having learned that Paderewski was to play that afternoon, was determined to hear him.

As they parted, Mrs. Trevor-Allen was seized of a

sudden thought and, turning back, rapidly communicated it to Lady Malcolm, who, to judge by her reception of it, was delighted.

The intrigue Mrs. Trevor-Allen was engaged in was made apparent at the close of the first part of the programme. Rising from her seat in her box, only less conspicuous than the one occupied by Mrs. Trescotte, she made her way on the arm of Tracey Harte, who had come to her, across the house. People who were watching her—nearly all occupying the tier—opined she was going to the box of Lady Malcolm, who had been soon discovered after her entrance, and whose friend Mrs. Trevor-Allen was known to be. What was their surprise, then, and horror, too, when they saw her enter the Trescotte box!

Dorothy, apparently absorbed in her programme but really in her own bitter thoughts, was startled, and not well pleased, with the intrusion. But her visitor was not to be rebuffed.

"I saw you enter," she said, "in the lobby, you know, but I was too far away to salute you. So I have taken the first opportunity to come to you to complain of your treatment of me."

"My treatment of you?" inquired Dorothy, instantly appreciating the meaning of the ostentatious visit, and ready to cry with a right good will when she saw the sympathy and kindness shining in the blue eyes of her visitor.

"Yes," replied the lively lady. "Now, don't try to think up excuses; I will accept none. It was

downright shabby. Three times have I called and three times have I been turned from your doors. Oh, I know," she rattled on, to enable Dorothy to take possession of herself, "I know you have thrown society over, but that is no reason why you should throw old friends over, who,"—there was a strange break in her voice and a strange change in the tone—"who love you."

Dorothy was not yet in possession of herself, and not daring to trust herself to speak, she furtively sought the hand of Mrs. Trevor-Allen and pressed it warmly. The young matron rattled on:

"I am coming to call to-morrow, and if I am refused again I shall take the highly respectable Downs by the ear and command him to lead me to his mistress."

Dorothy laughed a little hysterically as she replied:

"I must respect Downs' ears and instruct him to bring you to me when you call."

Mrs. Trevor-Allen had not been oblivious that her presence in that box had created a commotion in the other boxes. Tracey Harte had observed the commotion and, though uncomfortable, bore the ordeal well, in fact a little pleased with the idea that it was rather devilish than otherwise. The young woman who had made the situation improved her opportunity. Taking her lorgnette, with insolent elegance she swept the tier of boxes. From time to time, as she recognized acquaintances gazing in her direction, she lowered her glasses and bowed so

pronouncedly that to have refused to have returned the salutation would have been no less than an insult. Suddenly and with inimitable art, she cried :

"Why, there's Agatha—I beg her pardon, Lady Agatha Malcolm. Tracy, go at once to her box, presenting my name and the compliments of Mrs. Trescotte, and ask her here."

"But, Lou," protested Dorothy, dropping unconsciously into the old school day name, "perhaps it may not be agreeable to Lady Malcolm to visit me."

"Poh!" contemptuously answered the young matron, brushing aside the protest. "Tracey Harte, do as I bid you. Vanish!"

As the young gentleman disappeared, Mrs. Trevor-Allen continued in suspicious haste, "She knows all that any of us know, and when she comes, if you Lady Malcolm her, she'll not forgive you. It is all very well for those who were not her intimate friends, but for one who was as intimate as you were, 'Aggie' or 'Ag' is what she wants to hear."

By this time Dorothy had realized that the episode was one of careful arrangement—that the young lady beside her had witnessed her treatment in the lobbies, and had determined to defeat an organized humiliation of herself. Though her sensitive soul shrank from so public an exhibition, Dorothy felt that gratitude to Mrs. Trevor-Allen demanded that she should assist her ally in her impulsive and generous effort, and she also thought it would be no more difficult to go through with

than to sit alone and unnoticed in the box, conscious that the attempted humiliation had been successful.

The commotion became a hubbub when society saw Lady Malcolm on the arm of Tracey Harte with the earl, very distinguished looking, following leisurely behind, conveyed to the Trescotte house and saw the effusive kiss the American countess bestowed upon the lips of her old school friend.

Mrs. Trevor-Allen's triumph was now complete. With that smile of sweet innocence, which Lady Malcolm said always indicated mischief, she turned to listen to the next part of the programme.

When the concert was over the party descended to the pavement, Dorothy on the arm of the earl, and so admirably did Mrs. Trevor-Allen manoeuvre that Dorothy drove Lord and Lady Malcolm to their hotel. Tracey Harte was rewarded with a seat in the carriage of the young matron.

If Trescotte had been a woman, tears, for a complexity of reasons, would have stood in his eyes when he listened to Dorothy's recital of her afternoon's experience. As it was he was very tender toward Dorothy. He left a card for Mrs. Trevor-Allen in the evening.

Mrs. Trevor-Allen called on Dorothy the next morning, and was conveyed by Downs to his mistress. It was on this occasion that the vivacious young lady invited herself, Lord and Lady Malcolm, and Tracey Harte to dinner with the Trescottes the following week. She took supper

satisfaction in informing young Beestonmy, after she had sent her regrets for his mother's dinner on the same night, that really, you know, she couldn't decline the Trescotte invitation to meet Lord and Lady Malcolm—the Trescottes were so exclusive, entertained so rarely, and then only the very nicest people, that really, you know, an invitation from them was like a command from royalty.

All of which coming to the ears of Mrs. Courtenay made the heart of that good lady warm to the young woman, though she had heard of the blue ribbon remark. She was heard by her husband to say that, with such a lieutenant, if Trescotte were not so foolishly obstinate, she could before the end of the season make everyone bow down to the Trescottes. Perhaps it was Trescotte's refusal to be drawn into the contest that caused the gossip to swell higher and higher. If one won't fight back, one soon becomes the under dog. All this time Mrs. Trevor-Allen was a frequent visitor at the Trescotte house.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. ADAMS ARRIVES.

OSTRACISM was not prevented. Neither efforts of Mrs. Trevor-Allen, the dinner to Earl and Countess of Malcolm, the intimacy those noble people with the Trescottes, nor open countenance of the bishop, deterred society from ignoring the young people.

If Dorothy grieved over this ostracism, she never murmured. She realized that there were other people than those who arrogated all the superiority who brought as much refinement and culture far more intelligence and accomplishment to their intercourse with people, and who were wholly indifferent to the opinions of that society which bent on ignoring her. A few of her old friends, chief among whom was Mrs. Trevor-Allen, defended the society and laughed at it.

Mrs. Courtenay never was so haughty and arrogant as she was this winter, and never gave so elegant entertainments, nor such exclusive ones.

To all outward appearances the lives of the Trescottes were happy and pleasant. None of the rational pleasures which education and we

could bring did they deny themselves, and they ignored society as calmly as society ignored them. December found them looking forward to an event of importance.

Early in the month Mr. Adams, whose coming had been long expected by Mr. Magrane, arrived. Absent for many months upon the Pacific Coast, he was wholly unacquainted with the events detailed in the previous chapters. That he had once consulted Mr. Magrane as to his own marital position, was warrant to the lawyer to open the subject again.

"I seem to be the pivot on which all turns," Adams said after the lawyer had finished a recital of the events flowing from his discovery. "I don't know what to do. I thought I had decided upon a policy. But what you tell me sends me all adrift again. I hold nothing against Mr. Trescotte. He acted very handsomely in that Swiss affair—a little foolishly perhaps——"

"He admits that," broke in Mr. Magrane, "and as well, very youthfully."

"Oh," returned Adams, "his intention was all right. He wanted to save Elsie from the consequences of her own wild act. The fault was with the Hallocks—father and son—they are birds of prey."

"Do you mean they laid a trap for him?" asked the lawyer, reverting to an early suspicion.

"No; not a trap exactly. But they quickly comprehended a situation in which they saw oppor-

tunity for an advantageous alliance," said Adams. "You see, I've often talked with Elsie about this matter. You may blame Elsie for not insisting that she was already married. But they had persuaded her that she was not, that no real marriage had taken place, and she was so young and innocent, indeed, so ignorant, that she was wax in their hands. The truth is, Mr. Magrane, you can't make a woman believe that a marriage is a marriage unless it is solemnized by a clergyman. They don't know and don't care about the civil contract side of it. It is either a sacrament, or it is nothing. If you can persuade a woman to join you under the civil contract idea, you can go further and persuade her to join you without marriage of any kind. That's what I have come to believe. I thought I had persuaded Elsie that a marriage by a magistrate was as good as any kind of a marriage, but deep down in her heart she didn't believe it. She showed that, by teasing me for a marriage by a clergyman, the first four or five years. That was one of the troubles between us—the beginning of them, in fact. You see, Mr. Magrane, I couldn't consent to that. If I had, I would have admitted a doubt as to the regularity of our previous civil marriage. Then logically I would have had to admit the priority of that Swiss marriage with Trescotte. But I couldn't make Elsie see it. To be married over again by a clergyman was the remedy for all ills."

"Yes," replied the lawyer, much interested in the new tangle Adams was developing. "You would

have admitted the invalidity of the civil, by consenting to the performance of a churchly, marriage. Yet, if you had yielded to quiet the qualms of conscience of Mrs. Adams, I do not think you would have been troubled."

"Well, I thought I would get into trouble by it. Or, if I didn't, Elsie would."

Before this, the lawyer had noticed a tenderness when Adams spoke of Elsie.

"Trescotte," continued Adams, moving his chair closer to the lawyer's desk so that he could lean his arm upon it, "acted very handsomely toward me when in Berlin—the time I carried off Elsie, you know. Perhaps it would have been better for us all if I hadn't, but that doesn't alter the fact that Trescotte was very manly and straightforward. I thought, then, that his action was due to his belief that he had been badly treated by the Hallocks. But when I came to talk with Elsie, and learned all there was to be learned, I felt that it was because he saw Elsie was really fond of me, and I of her. The same sort of chivalry, you know, that made him marry Elsie. On her part, Elsie has never accounted satisfactorily to herself why she did not tell Trescotte of that marriage in Buffalo, before I turned up. She tried to, that day they were married in Switzerland, but then she was silenced by her father. You would suppose that she would have told him after she got from under her father's influence. But I suppose then she could not summon the courage, and so let things drift. Women are not like men.

They say women can't keep a secret. What rot! Give them a secret of their own and they'll preserve it under the rack. Poor Elsie!"

Again that note of tenderness and defense.

"You say," asked Adams, "that the woman Trescotte married this year is a fine woman?"

"One in ten thousand," said the lawyer. "A brave, loyal, true-hearted woman."

"I'm sorry for her," commented Adams.

"I presume," said the lawyer, "Trescotte could straighten out all this confusion by suing Mrs. Adams for divorce, but that would involve everybody—you, Mrs. Adams, the Trescottes, the Hallocks—in a scandal."

"D—the Hallocks," cried Adams energetically, "but I wouldn't like Elsie to be tortured by it. You see, Mr. Magrane, the trouble is, that to the world Elsie would come out of such a suit the worst of all, and yet no more to blame than anybody else who is mixed up in the confounded muddle."

He rested his head on his hand as he thought.

"She'd be all right," he went on, as if answering his own thoughts, "if it wasn't for her family. They keep her stirred up all the time."

"Do you mean to say," asked the lawyer, purpose sounding in his voice, "that it was her family which made the trouble between yourself and wife?"

"You keep saying my wife," laughed Adams, "but I suppose she must be distinguished some way. No, I can't say that and be truthful. They contributed

largely to the trouble, though. I think if it hadn't been for them we might have settled our differences in our own way. The first trouble came from Elsie's pestering me to be married again. Perhaps I was foolish, but you see I resented those five months she spent with Trescotte. Her persistent pestering never let it get out of my head."

"But you condoned those five months when you took her from Trescotte," urged the lawyer.

"That's all right. I know I did. And having done so, I should stand by it. That's all right. I know I should. I suppose if I wasn't prepared to do so, I should have left her where she was. But you know when a man wants a certain woman, he wants her, and he'll sacrifice everything, go through everything, to get her; forget everything but the thought of having her. It's a kind of insanity, I suppose. At all events, that's how it was with me, and the opposition of the Hallocks made me all the more determined to get her. But I kept this feeling of resentment against those five months with Trescotte from Elsie until the first baby came—the boy. The fact was—well, hang it! it was Trescotte's boy, and that was all there was about it. There was the living, ever-present evidence of the five months. I confess I hated the youngster, and I presume the more I hated it the more Elsie's mother heart pitied and loved the helpless thing."

A strange expression stole over the lawyer's face, and he partially turned to his desk and gathered the scattered papers together. Adams stopped, but as

Mr. Magrane reassumed his listening attitude he went on:

"I imagine I was rather a brute. But there it was, and I wasn't perfect—only human, you know. I suppose she wanted sympathy, and went to her mother for it; the mother went with the story to her husband; Hallock came to me; I resented his interference and had a row with him. Well, the result was we went apart."

The two remained silent much longer than either supposed. There was an anxious frown and an expression of sadness on Adams' face. Finally the lawyer said:

"Your wife expresses strong affection for you—has done so within a short time to my knowledge."

"You keep on saying my wife. Yet, she isn't, you know," said Adams half inquiringly.

"I think she is," replied Mr. Magrane significantly.

Mr. Adams was aroused into mental activity.

"You mean something," he said sharply, "something different from what you said when I consulted you before."

"Yes, I do," replied the lawyer. "I told you then I was expressing an opinion without much consideration. Since then a new phase of the question has been presented to me, and I have concluded that you are still truly married to Mrs. Adams."

The dominating expression upon the face of Mr. Adams was that of surprise, but there was also another blended with it, but whether of satisfaction

or dissatisfaction it was difficult for Mr. Magrane to tell. Perplexity, however, made its appearance as the lawyer developed the idea of a common law marriage of himself. When Mr. Magrane had finished he waited for a remark, but as none was forthcoming, he said ;

"The establishment of the fact of a common law marriage between yourself and Mrs. Adams would simplify matters for Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte."

"Which you are anxious to do?" said Adams somewhat jealously.

"Yes," simply replied the lawyer; "but not at your expense, or of that of right or justice."

"I suppose," said Adams, "Trescotte can bring some sort of a suit to get the matter determined."

"I don't think he will," replied the lawyer. "At all events, not with my advice."

"Suppose I won't——" but Adams stopped short as another thought crossed his mind. "Elsie may think of bringing suit against me?"

"No, I don't believe it. Mrs. Adams' sole hope is a restoration of relationship with you. Her fear is that you will bring suit. She loves you."

"Well, I won't, that's settled. I won't involve her in any scandal. She's had trouble enough."

He was silent a moment and then said :

"I like that man Trescotte, always did. Of course it is absurd after what I have said, but it is because of the plucky way he tried to save Elsie from the consequences of her wild freak. You say he loves the woman he married?"

"I never saw deeper devotion."

Adams leaned back in his chair, balancing his cane on his forefinger, a trick he was very expert at, and which was always indicative of deep thinking.

"Suppose," he asked, "I refuse to bring suit and that Elsie does, too, what is the result?"

"Matters must stand as they are, I suppose. So long as you are separated from Mrs. Adams, maintaining the idea that the civil marriage was invalid, there must always be a doubt as to the regularity of the Trescotte marriage."

"Hum. But the separation took place before I believed our marriage to be invalid, and Elsie knows nothing about it as yet."

"But she does."

"Who told her? You?" bluntly asked Adams.

Mr. Magrane related the story of Mrs. Courtenay's visit to Mrs. Adams, adding that it was done without his, Magrane's, knowledge. The other had listened attentively.

"So," he cried quite excitedly, his eyes sparkling. "Tried to get Elsie to set up a claim to Trescotte, eh? The little woman refused? That's like her. Hearts are always trumps with Elsie. I would have bet in advance that that was just what she would do."

"She told Mrs. Courtenay she would do nothing to increase the misery of Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte, and that she loved you too well to think of anyone else than you as a husband."

"Well, what can I do?"

"You can accept your marriage as true and binding and resume marital relations with Mrs. Adams."

"But the boy; hang it, Magrane! I can't go on pretending to be its father, and I must, unless I effect on Elsie. I could get over the whole affair if it wasn't for the boy, for I'll confess the longer I'm away from Elsie the more I long for her. But I can't get over the boy."

"It's difficult to advise you on that point."

The lawyer played with the locket on his chain as he tried to see a way out of the difficulty. Finally he said:

"See here, Adams, why not go to Trescotte and have a free talk with him?"

"What for?" asked Adams, somewhat startled.

"Something may come of it."

"I've got nothing to ask of him; he has of me. He ought to come to me."

"That is true," replied the lawyer. "But what Trescotte has to ask is so great that, sensitive as he is, he would shrink from seeking you. It would be a generous act to meet him more than halfway. An interview might lead to good results. Let me arrange to have you meet him at three to-morrow, and then come to me and see if there is not a straight road out of this tangle."

Adams after some demurral consented, wondering what Mr. Magrane hoped to gain by such an interview.

CHAPTER V.

FORTUNE'S FANTASTIC SPORTS.

AN hour before Mr. Adams was to meet Mr. Trescotte, as arranged by Mr. Magrane, a young woman alighted from a public hack and climbed the steps of the Trescotte residence. A lad of eight or nine years accompanied her. When the door was opened to her, and she asked for the lady of the house, she was told that Mrs. Trescotte was not at home.

Evidently she accepted the phrase as an euphemism.

"My call is on business, not a social one," she said.

The servant, considering it a case for the consideration of higher authority, turned her into the reception room and disappeared. A moment later Downs, self-respectful and deferential, came and repeated the information with the addition that his mistress had gone out in the carriage and was expected home every moment.

"I have come a long distance," explained the young woman, "and my time is limited."

Downs, with that expertness born of long and

varied experience, determined that the visitor was a lady, and suggested the propriety of waiting. This was what the lady wanted, and Downs, thinking she was wearied, and perceiving that she was cold, brought her a glass of wine, a thoughtful attention which emboldened the lady to ask if Mr. Trescotte was at home or abroad. Downs began to have doubts of the wisdom of his suggestion when the lady, on being informed that the master of the house was within doors, and would doubtless see her if she desired it, showed so much agitation in her disclaimer of such desire. But having doubts is not always having warrant for action, so Downs did nothing more than draw the curtains back and let in a little more sunshine through those windows that opened upon Central Park.

The lady waited. Ten or fifteen minutes passed and there was a diversion. A quick step in the hall, and Trescotte entered the room. Surprised to find an occupant, he hesitated on the threshold an instant, then bowed courteously and crossed the room for the book he sought. Had he closely observed the lady then, he would have seen that the color left her face on his entrance, then surged back, suffusing it. He was about to leave the room without speech, but he stopped, bending a perplexed glance upon the lady.

"I presume you are awaiting the return of Mrs. Trescotte?"

The lady bowed in response.

"I do not think she will be long now," he said

without losing his perplexed expression. "Can I serve you in any way?"

Replying in the negative, the lady thanked him, but in so low and strained a voice that the child looked up at his mother in surprise. Trescotte left the room, his face showing that memory suggested he should know the lady, but had failed to tell him who she was.

Then followed a period of undisturbed waiting, during which time the lady had ample time to recover from the agitation into which she had been thrown by Trescotte's entrance, but which time she spent in drawing the boy to her and earnestly studying his features. By and by a carriage was rapidly driven to the front, and the watchful Buttons threw open the door to admit two ladies. Downs appeared and informed one of them that a lady was awaiting her in the reception room. All of which the waiting lady could hear through the open doors, but could not see.

"Go to my room, Lou, and let Marie give you some writing materials," she heard one lady say. "And, Downs, let Connor prepare himself to carry a note to the address Mrs. Trevor-Allen will give him."

The owner of the voice entered the reception room, holding in her hand the card Downs had given her.

"Mrs. Adams?"

She was smiling and pleasant.

"Mrs. Trescotte, I believe?"

The visitor arose, looking with keen but modest scrutiny upon the mistress of the house.

"Pray do not rise," said Dorothy. "Pardon me, if I go to the fire. It is very cold, is it not?"

Mrs. Adams, again much agitated, murmured that she had found it so, had been much chilled, but the servant had thoughtfully given her a glass of wine.

This exchange was followed by an embarrassing silence. Dorothy drew off her gloves, holding her pink and white fingers to the fire, wondering the while who her visitor could be, and what her business could be about. Mrs. Adams nervously turned her pocket-book over and over. The child, feeling strange, hid behind his mother, peeping out to watch the elegant lady bending over the coals. At length Dorothy, who had been expecting her visitor to open her business, began to think that distance restrained her, and so took a chair nearer.

"I fear I have given you a long wait," she said in the way of re-opening the conversation.

"I was in hopes," began the other, in a voice that trembled a little, "that my card would convey such knowledge of myself as to relieve me of the embarrassment of telling who I am."

Dorothy, flinging a quick, intense look upon Mrs. Adams, hastily left her seat, and going to the mantel took from it the card she had laid upon it and eagerly scanned it. She moved forward as if to rejoin her visitor, stood still, in unbounded amazement. She breathed rather than articulated:

"You are——" She got no farther. She was lost in a multitude of conjecture.

Mrs. Adams lifted a piteous, appealing face. She had found something condemning in Dorothy's manner.

"Do not be angry with me," she pleaded. "I am here only to assure you of my sympathy and friendship."

"Angry with you?"

All the rich sympathy of Dorothy's nature had been stirred by the sweet face on which was written so much suffering, and yearning for love and compassion. Her tone told Mrs. Adams she was not angry.

"It would have been very hard," continued Elsie, as she wound her arm about the boy, who had crept to her knee, "if you had repulsed me, for my coming to you has been so opposed."

Unacquainted with the purpose of her visitor, perplexed in her endeavor to penetrate its meaning, and embarrassed by the strangeness of the situation, which even yet in its entirety she had not comprehended, Dorothy did not know what to reply.

"You have something to tell me," she finally said.

"After all, it is very little," answered Mrs. Adams with touching simplicity. "It is that I will never harm you, or do anything to separate you from the man you love."

Dorothy was more perplexed.

"I cannot understand you," she cried, and in her perplexity her voice sounded sharply, as she was instantly aware. "There is something to be ex-

plained," she continued in a gentler tone, "something I should know. But this is not the place for such a talk as we should have. Come."

But where should they go? Her own room was occupied by Mrs. Trevor-Allen; in the library, her husband awaited an appointment; in the dining room, the servants were preparing lunch; the *salon* was too public. The music room was the only place.

"Come," she said; "we will go where we can be safe from interruption."

Mrs. Adams rose to follow, and stretched forth her hand to take that of her boy, when the outer door was opened and a man's voice was heard inquiring for Mr. Trescotte.

Mrs. Adams stopped, fairly staggered, and caught the back of the chair, and bending forward listened with halting breath. Dorothy had stopped on hearing the voice, but only to permit the caller to pass through the hall before they should enter it. She turned to say so to Mrs. Adams, when she was astounded to see the agitation of the other.

"Are you the gentleman to see Mr. Trescotte at three?" asked the servant.

"Yes."

The servant led the caller down the hall. They could be heard but not seen from the reception room.

"Who was that?" eagerly asked Mrs. Adams, even with feverish intensity.

"I do not know—a caller upon Mr. Trescotte," was Dorothy's wondering reply.

"It cannot be—cannot be possible," exclaimed

Mrs. Adams, relaxing her strained attention, now that the chance of a rencounter had passed. "I thought it was my husband's voice, but that is impossible—impossible."

"Indeed, I should think so," replied Dorothy with a reassuring smile.

It was remarkable to Dorothy, that Mrs. Adams, who bore such a peculiar relation to her own life, and whom she had never expected to see, should be under her roof, but that at the same time her husband, Adams, separated a year from his wife, should call to see Mr. Trescotte when the wife had called to see her, was too fantastical even for the happenings of chance.

"Rest assured," she continued kindly. "The gentleman who passed has an appointment with my husband. Had it been Mr. Adams, I should have known it."

But Mr. Trescotte, uncertain as to the outcome of the interview with Mr. Adams, had thought it best not to speak of it to his wife. So, satisfying Elsie, Dorothy led the way across the hall, through the *salon*, into the music room. Here she summoned a servant and, bidding him to prevent interruption and to beg Mrs. Trevor-Allen to excuse her for a short time, closed the doors.

CHAPTER VI.

A NEW TANGLE.

ADAMS yielded to Mr. Magrane's suggestion reluctantly. He was not convinced that good could result from an interview. The trouble was that Adams was not determined upon a course. He was without a policy. Enterprises he had been nursing a long time had, within the year, come to fruition, and he had accumulated wealth. The administration of it was difficult, because of the uncertain conditions of his marital relations. Viewing divorce as one path out of the difficulty, yet he shrank from the cutting of all the ties binding him to Elsie. He had gone to Mr. Magrane expecting to be strengthened toward divorce and found the lawyer advising reconciliation. To this he was more than inclined. But the boy—Trescotte's boy—that was the stumbling-block. If the boy could be disposed of, the way would be clear. Reconciliation meant the assumption of the parentage of another man's offspring. Against this he revolted.

It was in this indeterminate state of mind that he met Trescotte. There was a great deal of embarrassment upon both sides. When they exchanged views Adams discovered that one consideration

alone swayed Trescotte, and before that all others were small; Trescotte wanted the cloud upon the marriage certificate of Dorothy lifted; it was for Dorothy's sake, not his own. Trescotte soon learned that Adams was half-hearted in his desire for a divorce from Elsie, and was deterred by fear of the scandal that would result from such a procedure; it was for Elsie's sake, not his own. There were reserves upon the part of each which prevented them from getting close to the subject they discussed. Trescotte did not urge a restoration of relationship between Adams and Elsie which would make the common law marriage a fact, because there was the five months he had spent with Elsie, which seemed to him indelicate to call up. Adams did not show Trescotte that the bar to restoration was the boy, the consequence of that five months, because Trescotte did not have knowledge of the child. So the conference came to naught. Adams brought it to an end by saying:

"Well, Mr. Trescotte, we're agreed upon one thing. We don't want our wives involved in scandal. I'll promise that whatever course I pursue will involve no scandal. I suppose I could sue for divorce on the ground of abandonment, and arrange to have the validity of the first marriage to come up some way for settlement. Frankly, I should like to have the matter settled, for my own sake as well as yours, and I had just as soon see the validity of it established as not, for if it was, it would be no bar to divorce proceedings."

"I should be the last one, anxious as I am for Mrs. Trescotte," promptly replied Trescotte, "to encourage divorce proceedings. The establishment of the legality of your marriage would be a very happy thing for Mrs. Trescotte and myself. But neither of us, I hope, are so lost to the rights of others as to try to secure such a result through the misery and unhappiness of Mrs. Adams. I am told that Mrs. Adams entertains all her old affection for you. I would much rather see a happy adjustment of your difficulties."

Adams put out his hand and grasped that of Trescotte warmly.

"I know you would," he said heartily. "You are that kind of a man. But—well, Mr. Trescotte, there is something in the way that I cannot speak to you about—nothing," he added quickly, "that reflects upon the good name or repute of Mrs. Adams."

Again that sensitiveness as to Elsie. It struck Mr. Trescotte as pathetic.

While this was going forward in the library, Dorothy and Elsie were conferring in the music room.

"You say," said Dorothy after she had closed the doors, "that you have come to give me the assurance of sympathy; that you will do nothing to separate me from the man I love. Am I in danger of separation?"

"Are you not?" asked Elsie in some wonder.

"I do not think so."

"Your mother said you ought to be, and pleaded with me to claim Mr. Trescotte as my husband——"

"My mother?" interrupted Dorothy, scarcely believing that she had heard aright.

"Yes; I refused, and immediately, believe me, Mrs. Trescotte, immediately."

"Where?" demanded Dorothy. "Where did you see my mother?"

The story that Mrs. Courtenay had carefully kept to herself came out, and Dorothy knew of the rapid journey to Buffalo, and the defeat of her mother. Dorothy was angry. Angry because of her mother's unwarrantable methods, and because of the cruelty to the crushed woman who had come to her in such simplicity and confidence. She found upon inquiry that all this time Elsie had remained in the belief that her marriage to Adams was invalid, and that Adams being free, hope of reconciliation was lost. Mourning and grieving over this in secret, the spirit of the once madcap, reckless, gay Elsie Hallock had been crushed.

With earnestness and enthusiasm almost, Dorothy presented the common law marriage theory, trying to persuade Elsie that hope of reconciliation was far from lost, since she was still the wife in law and in fact. It is doubtful whether Elsie comprehended Dorothy's important communication, for she shook her head sadly and seemed to regard Dorothy's information as only another complication in the confusion in which she was involved. But whether or not Elsie comprehended, Dorothy got back to the assertion that there was no danger to her of separation from Mr. Trescotte.

To this Elsie replied that she would not permit herself to be used to that end.

"Used?" queried Dorothy. "There is something more in your mind?"

"Yes," answered Elsie. "This affair is so complicated that it is difficult to say all you want to. This is what I want to say to you—what I have come to you from Buffalo for. My brother has learned on good authority that Mr. Adams is here in the city preparing to sue me for divorce. I fear, though my brother denies it, that it is by arrangement with my brother or with my father, and that they mean to establish that there was no marriage between us, so that it will come down to the marriage in Switzerland. That means they would try to force me to claim Mr. Trescotte as a husband."

Dorothy winced under this and looked very severe.

"That is what your mother wanted me to do. But I refused her, and I never will consent."

"But," said Dorothy, a little hard, though she tried not to be. "What would it serve them? Mr. Trescotte would resist."

"He is very rich, is he not?" asked Elsie innocently. "Oh, the sordidness of it! It is a miserable thing, and before the scandal is out I came here to save you this much misery and to tell you I will be no party to it. I have too much sympathy for you, for I know what it is to be torn from the man you love. I could not stay at home quietly until I had come and told you this. It seemed to be a duty."

She was so pathetic in her earnestness that Dorothy, to conceal her own tears, bent over her and kissed her and whispered: "I know that; I'm sure of it."

Suddenly a thought crossed her mind and it must be admitted accompanied with a pang of jealousy.

"Have you seen Mr. Trescotte?"

"He came into the reception room when I was there," replied Mrs. Adams somewhat distressed. "But he did not recognize me and I did not make myself known. I do not want to see him. It is embarrassing enough to come to you."

Dorothy bent her head in a tumult of rushing thought and alarm. She did not fear separation from Trescotte. She believed Mrs. Adams and trusted Trescotte, but she was apprehensive. There was the threatened scandal, the publicity, the gossip, and while she was very grateful to Mrs. Adams and felt sincere, active sympathy, still she wished Mrs. Adams was out of the house, out of all chance of meeting Trescotte. She wondered for a brief instant if a desire to see Trescotte was not really the meaning of Elsie's visit, but she dismissed the idea as unworthy herself and of Mrs. Adams.

The little boy, tired of a conversation from which he could extract no amusement, sat himself on the floor between the two women and played with the scattered sheets of music that had fallen from the stand. Had Dorothy known the relation this innocent lad bore to the tangle they were all involved in, what a complicating force he was in Elsie's prob-

lem, and might become in hers, possibly she might have given more attention to the little one playing so unobtrusively. As it was, too much absorbed in the ideas her conference with Elsie had given birth to, she was only dimly conscious that a child—Mrs. Adams' child—was there.

"You say," she asked suddenly, "you still love Mr. Adams?"

"With all my heart."

"Yet you are separated from him."

"I could not help it."

Woody into confidence by Dorothy's sympathy and kindness, Mrs. Adams began to tell the reason. Almost immediately she saw it involved the paternity of the little child—Trescotte's child. She recoiled from telling Trescotte's wife the fact, not because she feared for herself, but instinct informed her that it would be a lightning stroke to the one who had risked so much to remain with the man of her love, to learn that that man was the father of a child of which she was not the mother. Elsie wondered how she could have brought the child there—why the fact that she was to visit the wife of its father had not occurred to her. She upbraided herself for her thoughtlessness and became filled only with one thought, and that, to leave the house as soon as possible.

"Well, Mrs. Adams," said Dorothy, who had been following her own thoughts, "we all of us will fear a suit if it is to open our history to the world. And we'll hope that it will not come, but upon the con-

trary, that you and your husband may be brought together again. Perhaps Mr. Trescotte can do something to show Mr. Adams that a marriage does exist between you, and that that in itself will bring about a reconciliation."

"I fear not," Elsie said. "There are some things, apparently, Mr. Adams will not forgive. If you feel I am sincere when I say nothing will persuade me to interfere with your happiness, I am content. I expect no happiness in my own life. But it will be a little less miserable if I can feel that I have prevented your separation. I owe this to Mr. Trescotte, for he tried, at his own sacrifice, once to serve me in the highest manner a man can serve a woman. I want him to know I have not forgotten what he did then; that I am filled with remorse that I was so weak at that time. And now that I have met you, I want you to know for yourself that nothing I may do will ever interfere with your happiness. And if you do, I will go home, perhaps never to see you again."

She arose to end the interview—to escape with her boy from the house of his father. Dorothy rose with her, and threw open the door leading into the *salon*.

Mrs. Trevor-Allen stood within.

"I was tired of being alone," she laughed, "so I came down into this favorite room of mine."

Dorothy was making some commonplace apology for having left her so long alone, when she heard her husband's voice outside the door.

"I hear my wife's voice in the *salon*," he said.
"Let me present you."

The next instant Trescotte, followed by Adams, entered.

"Elsie! My God!" cried Adams.

"George, I——"

Elsie nearly toppled over in her agitation, and, indeed, would have fallen had not Mrs. Trevor-Allen put forth an arm to save her.

"Elsie," cried Trescotte, with a sudden rush of recollection, "what brings——"

In his surprise he moved toward Elsie and the movement brought him to the side of the child clinging to his mother's skirts. He was interrupted by Mrs. Trevor-Allen, who uttered a cry of surprise.

"Look!" she said, pointing to the child. "The resemblance. It is marvelous!"

"And that boy is with her!" cried Adams bitterly.
"Your boy, Trescotte—for it is yours!"

"His?"

The question came from Dorothy in a blending of contempt, indignation, and incredulity. The little child began to whimper when he found himself the object of all these intense and agitated looks, and tried to hide his face in the skirts of his mother. But Dorothy had seen the resemblance, too pronounced to be denied.

"Answer him," she said commandingly, as she turned to Trescotte. "Is that your child?"

Amazed and bewildered, Trescotte replied

"I don't know."

Adams laughed bitterly.

The weight of Mrs. Adams became heavier on the arm of Mrs. Trevor-Allen.

"She has fainted," quietly remarked that lady.

Trescotte led Adams out of the room. Dorothy, with a heart full of bitterness, joined Mrs. Trevor-Allen in the effort to revive the mother of her husband's eldest child.

BOOK IV.—THE TRIUMPH OF THE BLUE RIBBON.

CHAPTER I.

MOMENTOUS EVENTS.

IN the following February occurred three events of concern, all within a week and in the order named :

A baby, a little girl, came to the house of Trescotte ;

Mrs. Trevor-Allen became a widow, her husband having died after a brief illness ; and

Mr. and Mrs. Hermann Waldemar returned from Germany to begin a career of fashion in New York.

The first event again put into malignant activity the gossiping tongues, which, having accomplished the ostracism of Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte, had stilled from sheer weariness. And Mrs. Courtenay, learning of its renewal, and knowing of the near approach of her other daughter, wondered, with a little trepidation, what the effect would be on Waldemar. When she saw Hilda, however, her concern was of another kind. A marvelous change had come over Hilda. What had happened in the four months of

her wedded life? This was a question Mrs. Courtenay frequently asked herself, without satisfactory answer. The fire was gone from Hilda's eyes and there was listlessness in her manner. It was not because of the Trescotte gossip, for Hilda languidly approved Dorothy's course, and shocked her mother by remarking indifferently that without the common law marriage phase, she would have approved it. The promise of social triumphs did not appeal to her. She accepted the programme of social festivities Mrs. Courtenay had laid out for her, with the comment that they were the penalties a bride must endure. She was interested in nothing. Only when there were strangers present, or some of her old rivals on the matrimonial course, was anything seen of that gallant and haughty bearing of the favorite Courtenay daughter. Discreet questioning failed to elicit information. She had enjoyed her trip, she had been charmingly received by Waldemar's noble relatives, and she had been noticed and complimented by the emperor. Had Waldemar been attentive? Oh, yes, he had been all that had been necessary. And here inquiries ended. Mrs. Waldemar had no complaints to make, and Hilda Courtenay had passed away.

Mrs. Courtenay took up a course of silent observation, but with little, if any, more success. What she did learn did not please her. She found that Waldemar took up his life in New York just as he had laid it down to go abroad on his wedding trip. His stable, his club, and his other pleasures did not lan-

guish for lack of his attention. Though Mrs. Waldemar's chair in their box at the autumn season of opera was always occupied, that of Hermann was nearly always vacant. But as Hilda did not complain, Mrs. Courtenay could not interfere. The world said behind Hilda's back that Hilda Waldemar had grown unbearably insolent since her marriage.

Hilda went to see Dorothy within twenty-four hours of her landing and frequently thereafter. She was more tender and affectionate with her sister than was her wont, and nestling the little stranger in her arms, dropped tears on its face she was ashamed to show. Dorothy saw the change in Hilda and could not tell what it was. A change in Dorothy was noticed by Hilda and neither could she penetrate that. Whatever these changes were they drew the two sisters closer together than they had ever been before.

The first time Hilda went to see Dorothy she met Trescotte in the hall as she was leaving.

"I want to ask you some questions," she said, after she had lifted her cheek to be kissed by her brother-in-law.

Divining what they would be, Trescotte took her into the library and closed the door.

"There has been some trouble about your marriage, Henry," she said, as she seated herself in a large easy-chair. "Tell me about it."

"You have heard nothing, then?" he asked.

"Only enough to know there was something," she

replied. "Hermann's father wrote a mere mention of it while we were abroad."

Trescotte told her the story without color or argument, ending with the common law marriage aspect.

"I am glad you have told me the story," she said simply when he had finished. "I uphold you and Dorothy in everything you have done. Happiness is worth more than all society can give you—ten times more. She *is* happy, isn't she?"

Trescotte's face was very sober as he replied:

"I don't think I ever saw anyone happier than she was until the occurrence of a certain event in December. Then there was a change in her. I am not prepared to say that it affected her happiness, but it did make a change, though Dr. Balkin told me to dismiss the idea, as it was only a symptom. Doctors explain everything by symptoms."

Hilda looked at him searchingly for a moment. A spasm of pain, quickly repressed, passed over her face as she said:

"You are a very good man, Henry."

She rose from her seat. As she walked to the door, she said:

"When Dorothy is well enough I will give a dinner. Some friends are coming over to whom I must be nice. They will be here about the time Dorothy can go out."

"You know we do not go into society at all," suggested Trescotte.

"You make a mistake," said the bride bitterly. "Society! Society is a spaniel. Whip it and it

cringes at your feet. What a contempt for it I have."

She left Trescotte amazed at her mood.

The change Trescotte had spoken of as apparent in Dorothy had been noticed by Mrs. Trevor-Allen as well. After the event of the meeting of Mr. and Mrs. Adams in the Trescotte house on that December afternoon, there could be no withholding of confidence from that lady. She had learned enough to make knowledge of all necessary. And when Mrs. Adams left the house, all was told her by Trescotte at Dorothy's request.

That afternoon was as embarrassing as any Trescotte had ever passed. It was more so than the morning of nine years previous, in that little town of Switzerland, when he had married Elsie, for then he saw a way out. Now he didn't. Adams had left immediately upon the *dénouement*. Mrs. Adams was compelled to remain until she recovered strength enough to go. When she did, she was accompanied by the discreet and trusty Downs, who went with her to the station and saw her comfortably bestowed on her journey to Buffalo. In the meantime Trescotte was immured in his library, alone with his thoughts, left to ponder upon the extraordinary happenings of chance; upon the singular situation of his wife, Dorothy, ministering to the needs of his once wife, Elsie; of the child, of whose existence he had no knowledge until so rudely and shockingly revealed to him, and who he now knew was the innocent cause of wrecking the happiness of two lives.

These thoughts weighed heavily upon a man of Trescotte's make-up. What course was he to pursue? Existing, the boy was a bar to a reconciliation of Mr. and Mrs. Adams. His interview with Adams had shown how fond Adams was of Elsie. The boy—his boy—stood in the way. And he had not failed, amid his amazement at the revelation that he was the father of a lad eight years old, to notice the change in Dorothy's tone and manner following that revelation. Was the unfortunate child to wreck the happiness of Dorothy and himself, as he had that of Adams and Elsie? What could he do to avert it? In fact, what could he do in any direction? Elsie loved the lad, perhaps all the more because he was so unfortunate and the cause of so much trouble. That was the way with mothers. Suppose Elsie were willing to give up the lad, and he took him, would not Dorothy look upon him from her standpoint, as Adams had from his? What happiness if, while the child was pure and innocent, the Almighty in his mercy would take the boy to himself. The thought did not seem impious, and it would be such a solution of the vexed problem.

When Mrs. Adams had gone Dorothy brought Mrs. Trevor-Allen to Trescotte and requested him to tell their story.

When he had finished, before any remark could be made by Mrs. Trevor-Allen, Dorothy spoke, her manner cold and her voice hard:

"And the boy? You have omitted all mention of him."

"I did not know of his existence until this afternoon."

"I am glad to hear you say so," said Dorothy, still in her hard, severe tone. "To have learned that you knew of his existence and had been so indifferent to him would have lessened you in my esteem."

Trescotte looked at Dorothy so astounded and so pained that Mrs. Trevor-Allen was filled with pity for him.

"And now that you do know that he exists, what?" demanded Dorothy.

"It complicates matters," replied Trescotte sadly.

"Will you take him to your own care?" Her question was asked almost fiercely.

"He has a mother."

"And I am not that mother!"

Trescotte, too much distressed to appreciate at its full significance this cry, went to the window and looked out. But light flooded the mind of Mrs. Trevor-Allen. She saw that a profound jealousy possessed Dorothy; that with all the force of her deep love for Trescotte, she resented the inexorable fact that her husband was the father of a child of which she was not the mother. It was a strange manifestation. Dorothy knew of the previous marriage, she knew of the five months Trescotte had lived with Elsie, and had not resented it. Indeed, she had received Elsie without a pang of jealousy. Yet when the boy, a natural issue of that brief union, was presented she was transformed. Trescotte

wondered at this; he was a man. Mrs. Trevor-Allen did not; she was a woman.

Dorothy left the room. Trescotte, hearing the rustle of her skirts, turned and would have restrained her. Mrs. Trevor-Allen put up a warning finger, and in a low tone said:

"Leave her to me."

She followed Dorothy. No sooner had they reached her room than Dorothy, flinging herself into Mrs. Trevor-Allen's arms, burst into tears.

The jealousy of women is incomprehensible. It has no reason. It neither thinks nor argues. It simply is, and its vision is distorted. It sees what no person can. It imagines, and its imaginings are pitiful because the effects are real in the sorrow and misery they bring. That which is absurd to others is plausible to a jealous woman. With a woman so possessed one cannot reason. The best and noblest of their sex are subject to these attacks, and when attacked are without sense. Ridicule or condemnation is the only remedy. Mrs. Trevor-Allen understood this.

Waiting until the paroxysm was exhausted, Mrs. Trevor-Allen led Dorothy to a chair and sat her down.

"You must be ill," she said, "or you would not act so foolishly."

Dorothy, expecting sympathy, looked up indignantly.

"I mean it," went on her friend gravely. "You have no right to worry Mr. Trescotte, troubled as

he is with a great sorrow. What sympathy did you give him when he needs so much?"

Dorothy stared at her censor. Jealousy is selfish. Dorothy had a dim realization of the truth.

"What is the highest duty of a wife? Is it not to sympathize with her husband when he is in trouble, to comfort him? It is especially your duty, surrounded as you are with such love and tenderness."

"That boy is his," murmured Dorothy, and immediately conscious of the confession involved in her words.

"He does not deny it."

"Is that nothing?" whimpered Dorothy.

"Nothing that you have to complain of," calmly went on Mrs. Trevor-Allen. "Your time to complain was when Mr. Trescotte told you he had lived for five months with Mrs. Adams as his wife. When in the knowledge of it you accepted him, you forgave everything, even the inevitable result of such a union."

"O Lou!" cried Dorothy. "You do not understand me."

"I understand everything, even that which you think, but are ashamed to say. I have little patience with you. Here you are, blessed as few women are, with a superior man for a husband, who loves you from the bottom of his noble heart, who surrounds you with all that love can give you and the protection tenderness can invent—who makes your life a poem, one continued strain of delightful music, whose devotion is constant and never ceasing, and

you have the audacity, the wickedness, to harbor bitter thoughts, instead of giving him that sympathy he so much needs when so afflicted. It is the most pitiable exhibition of ingratitude I have ever seen. It is selfish, it is contemptible, and to me distressing, because I have revered you as a noble woman. It is petty jealousy, and I am ashamed of you."

"Lou Graham!" cried Dorothy, springing to her feet, her eyes blazing, going back to the girl-day name of her friend. "I'll not listen to you!"

"You must!" insisted the other stoutly. "It is because I am your friend that I say what I do. What right have you to quarrel with Fortune? Did you not marry where you loved? Did you not choose for yourself? Have not flowers been strewn in your path? Have not love and tenderness enveloped you? Look at me—at me, and be unhappy, if you dare. Forced to marry an old man whose life reeks with the filth of it; sacrificed to save my family from the poverty he could put in, and the station from which he could hurl it; compelled to put aside the romance that could bring joy and sweetness into my life, to see two lives wrecked, to live without joy and without hope—to know the sacrifice I had made was regarded as treachery to the love I had confessed and the promises I had pledged, to see the man I loved and who loved me, sink and pass away, believing that sordid ambition had made me faithless, without the power to explain, and then tell me what you have to complain of? What is it? What? Your husband has

discovered that he is the father of a child five years older than your acquaintance with him!"

Dorothy, with outstretched arms, her face tender with sweet pity, went to her friend, crying:

"Forgive me. And you wear your life so bravely."

CHAPTER II.

MRS. TREVOR-ALLEN'S PLAN.

THE revelation of the sorrow and bitterness of Mrs. Trevor-Allen's life drew Dorothy more closely to her friend. The latter knew her friend envied her the happiness of her life, was proud of it, yet pitied her friend for what was denied her. While this was all true, an intangible, impalpable something had come up between Dorothy and Trescotte. Dorothy felt it, because it had existence in herself. Trescotte felt it, because he noted its existence in Dorothy. It was difficult to establish what and where it was. There was the same attention, the same tenderness the same devotion, the same love upon the part of Trescotte. There was the same admiration, the same confidence, the same trust, the same love on the part of Dorothy. It was the shadow of the boy. He did not carry it with him when he went away with his mother. Shadows are intangible. How was it shown? Ah, that was as impalpable as the thing itself. Both were conscious of it, though it was not mentioned by either. When two lives are completely mingled, the shade of an expression and the glance of an eye have an eloquence words cannot express. Dorothy could not pardon fate for

giving to another woman what she believed should have been hers. Such emotion could be possessed only by a woman passionately loving her husband. While Dorothy loved her husband, admired him, held him guiltless, yet she vented her deep disappointment on him. I do not attempt to account for this. To do so would be to confess myself a fool. He who attempts to account for the workings of the female heart is a fool. All he can hope to do is to detect its operations and hold them up to view, and ninety times in a hundred he fails at that. Explain? Explain the motive power of the stars in their heavenly courses. The female heart is one of God's incomprehensibilities.

When the baby came there was another change. Something of the old something slid out of sight. Trescotte was very proud and tender. And Dorothy was very proud and tender, because he was proud. Perhaps if Mrs. Trevor-Allen could have been a witness of their exchanges of affection she would have plumed herself upon having contributed to it by the drastic potion she had administered to Dorothy. But she did not.

Duty called her to the bedside of the man whose name she bore. There was no love, for she professed none, behind that duty, but she performed it with all the fidelity love could inspire. A frame weakened by years of self-indulgence could not at its advanced age withstand the insidious attack of disease, and he died, leaving her his vast fortune, as testimony, his will said, to his admiration of her

as a woman, and her excellence as a wife. This will created astonishment, and caused the matron mothers, who recognized in the new widow a formidable quantity in their problems, over their teacups to comment: "No fool like an old fool," and Mr. Magrane to say, with the applause of Mr. Trescotte, "Whatever the old fellow was, he appreciated a true woman when he found her." Mr. Trevor-Allen was buried, and society attended in large numbers, just as if he had been the wisest and best of men. And Mrs. Trevor-Allen in robes of black, donned because convention demanded them, a very charming widow, laughed gayly without a single pretense of sorrow, because she was not a hypocrite.

Summer came and went. Society flitted from the city and flitted back. This summer the Trescotts did not keep open house in the city. A cottage on the coast of Maine had been purchased, and there also Mrs. Trevor-Allen went to spend the months supposed to be devoted to mourning. When all involved in this tale returned to the city, the conditions were unchanged. Adams was upon the Pacific Coast and Elsie was with her father. Not a step toward the unraveling of the tangle had been taken.

One evening in the late autumn Mrs. Trevor-Allen and Mr. Magrane dined with the Trescotts. They met frequently at that table, now that Mrs. Trevor-Allen was withdrawn from society. The two were sitting apart after dinner while Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte were entertaining Mr. Courtenay,

who had dropped in as he did once or twice a week.

Suddenly Mrs. Trevor-Allen changed the topic of conversation:

"Mr. and Mrs. Adams have not been reconciled yet?"

"No," replied Mr. Magrane, rather startled by the abrupt manner the subject had been introduced. "It is singular you should speak of it to-day, for I have just received a letter from Adams, announcing his early return and his determination to arrive at some settlement of his marital perplexities."

"Do you know what he proposes?" asked the lady.

"No. He gives no indications." He laughed amusedly. "I tried to bring about a reconciliation the last time he was here. I laid a deep and, as I thought, astute plan. But chance broke it up. I got him to call on Trescotte, but as ill luck would have it, he met Mrs. Adams here and the boy—his stumbling-block."

"I was here at the time."

"Oh, were you? Adams said there was a lady other than Mrs. Trescotte present."

"The boy is handsome and attractive," said the widow.

"Is he? And resembles his father, I hear," laughed Mr. Magrane.

"Marvelously. His mother is very fond of him."

"Mothers usually are fond of their sons, are they not?"

"I was much attracted to the mother—Mrs. Adams, you know."

"She is a very sweet woman—so Adams says."

"Then why does he not become reconciled?" asked the widow.

"The boy, you know."

"Ah, the poor little fellow. He stands between his mother and happiness." Mrs. Trevor-Allen was sad and thoughtful.

Mr. Magrane looked down upon her admiringly, wondering whether he liked her best in her gay or her sympathetic mood.

"I have been in correspondence with Mrs. Adams," continued Mrs. Trevor-Allen. "I have conceived a great pity for her. I wish I could do something toward reconciliation. She longs for it—it has become a passion with her."

Dorothy overheard this statement during a lull in the conversation with her father and was surprised. She had heard nothing of this correspondence.

"Did she write you so?" asked Mr. Magrane, much interested.

"In express terms. Cannot we try again when Mr. Adams returns?"

"If the boy could be disposed of, everything could be accomplished."

Dorothy listened intently.

"It is a dreadful position to place a mother in," mused Mrs. Trevor-Allen.

"She must choose between husband and son."

"But things cannot go on as they are."

"Why not?"

"Because Mr. Adams will not be content to permit them," replied Mrs. Trevor-Allen. "Something public will be done, and in it the true parentage of the boy will be revealed."

Dorothy listened with parted lips, holding her breath lest she lose a word, thankful that her father was on his favorite topic of real estate.

"That will be bad," continued the widow, "not alone for Mrs. Adams, but for the boy as well."

"Ah!"

The lawyer had not thought of that.

"And you mean——" he asked.

"That they must be reconciled."

"But how?"

"In the interest of the boy himself, she must part with him. You see it is something more than a simple choice between son and husband."

"I see."

"I think," went on Mrs. Trevor-Allen, warming to her subject, "that if the fact were properly put before Mrs. Adams she would see it."

"A mother will not part with her child when she loves him," remarked the lawyer sententiously.

"A mother is capable of a sacrifice for her child you men cannot comprehend."

"Ah!" The tone was one of incredulity.

"A mother's love is without selfishness—the only unselfish thing I know in this selfish world."

"Except one thing," said the lawyer, who had heard her story from Dorothy.

"And that is——" The lady looked up and caught his look of admiration and was annoyed that she had asked the question.

"I cannot tell you now—some time perhaps I will. But what could she do with the child?" He lowered his voice so much that Dorothy could not hear him. "Give him to our friend Trescotte?"

"No," hurriedly responded the lady. "That would never do at all! I will take him, if she will give him to me."

"You?"

"I will adopt him. I am alone. I would adore the little one."

"But if you married again, what would the husband say?"

The charming widow laughed merrily, and saucily tossing her blond curls with that coquetry no woman can resist displaying when her own marriage is spoken of, replied:

"I will never marry; once will suffice for me. Besides, if I do, the man must marry the boy with the other incumbrance."

Mr. Magrane's fine dark eyes deepened as he laughed with her. She became sober suddenly, and as she leaned toward him, bent beseeching eyes upon him.

"Now, Mr. Magrane, let us be serious. Can't this be done? See what will result. Mrs. Adams will be restored to her husband, the lad's parentage will be prevented as a reproach, a scandal which might involve our friends will be avoided, and

I, in my loneliness, will have something to care for."

Dorothy heard it all, and was at once a prey to confusing and conflicting emotions. She looked to see if her husband had heard. She was convinced he had not.

"Well, I don't know," replied the lawyer thoughtfully. "Are you in earnest?"

"Entirely so," answered the lady sincerely. "It is not a sudden impulse. I have been thinking of it a long time. I have been waiting to meet you and ask you to undertake it."

"Let me think about it," said the lawyer, as he rose. "I will see you to-morrow evening if you will receive me, and talk it over again."

He took his leave, and as he descended the steps he saw a carriage drawn up in front. As he turned in the direction he was to go, he heard his name spoken. A woman was looking through the open window of the carriage. In the uncertain light he could not distinguish her features. As he approached he recognized Mrs. Waldemar and saw she was much agitated.

"You have been dining with Dorothy and Henry?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes."

"Tell me who were of the party?"

"Only Mrs. Trevor-Allen and myself."

"Is she stopping with them?"

"No; she is awaiting the coming of her carriage."

"Then she is the only one with them?"

"No; your father is there, but he was not at the dinner."

Mrs. Waldemar plainly showed increased agitation.

"Thank you, Mr. Magrane," she said, "please tell the driver to go on."

He complied with her request, and the driver asked where he should drive to. Hilda heard him and cried out:

"Anywhere. Around the block, anywhere, only hurry."

Astonished, Mr. Magrane watched the carriage drive away. Then he walked off in the opposite direction, and at the corner of the street waited for a car which passed on the cross street. He waited long enough to see a carriage, which he was satisfied was the one occupied by Hilda, turn the corner and take up a station on the opposite side of the street at a point from which a view of the Trescotte door could be commanded.

"Something's wrong," he said to himself as he stepped into the car which bore him away.

CHAPTER III.

HILDA'S ESCAPE.

HAD Mr. Magrane waited for the next car, he would have seen, as soon as Mr. Courtenay left the house, the carriage cross the street, Hilda alight and run up the steps of the Trescotte house, and the carriage drive away.

It so happened that as the door was opened to admit Hilda, Dorothy passed into the hall. As Hilda came forward Dorothy saw her. She was shocked. There was wildness, fear, despair in Hilda's face.

"Hilda!"

Alarm and amazement were in Dorothy's tones. Her outcry brought Trescotte and Mrs. Trevor-Allen from the *salon*. In the way Hilda put out her hands to Dorothy there was a suggestion of the sense of having reached a safe haven.

"Take me in and keep me!" she said.

"Have you left your home?" asked Dorothy, greatly frightened.

"Yes."

"And your husband?"

"Yes."

Before Dorothy could ask more questions, Mrs.

Trevor-Allen laid her hand upon Dorothy's arm and said:

"Wait. Take her to your own room."

Dorothy led the unresisting Hilda up the stairs. Mrs. Trevor-Allen and Trescotte exchanged glances.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Trescotte.

"The triumph of the blue ribbon," replied the lady bitterly.

In the meantime Dorothy had taken Hilda into her own room and removed her wraps and hat. Seating her in a chair, Dorothy asked:

"Now, dear, what is the trouble?"

"I am safe here," said Hilda with a sigh.

Dorothy thought Hilda had asked a question.

"Yes, safe from all interruption."

"He is waiting for me now at the opera house."

Dorothy noticed for the first time that Hilda was in evening dress with her diamonds and rubies.

"Who?" she asked.

"I took the carriage to join him, but I was frightened and came here."

"But who, child, who?"

A mighty fear took possession of Dorothy; a wave of possibilities and conjecture broke over her.

"Lord Buttontrave. I was to go with him to France. Our passage is engaged on the *Champagne*."

"Hilda!"

"I know it was very wicked. But I didn't go; I came to you."

"Thank God!"

"You see, I am a coward. I am not brave like you. I can't defy the world, like you, for love and happiness."

The iron entered Dorothy's soul. A wild sense of injustice filled her with indignation, frightened for Hilda as she was, and as well overwhelmed by shame for her.

"You are unjust in your trouble!" she cried. "The cases are different. You would forsake your marriage vows. I cling to them."

Hilda did not reply. She did not seem to hear Dorothy's protest. She sat with her eyes on vacancy, woe on her face. Dorothy regretting her outburst, was silent, too, thinking what she could do or say to comfort her sister.

Hilda rose to her feet.

"I can go to him yet. He will wait for me until the opera is over."

Dorothy sprang forward and firmly pressed Hilda back into her seat. "You will stay here," she said masterfully; "I will protect you from yourself!"

"He loves me, for he has followed me here."

"And Waldemar?"

"He loves his horses—and La Hoyle."

Dorothy had heard of La Hoyle. She was the divinity of the pink tights and multi-colored lights.

The miserable story was coming out by degrees.

There was a rap at the door. Dorothy opened it. Mrs. Trevor-Allen was there, asking if she could be of service.

"Please don't go away yet; I may need you," said Dorothy. "And won't you ask Mr. Trescotte to remain in for a while?"

Mrs. Trevor-Allen, satisfied something more than the usual had occurred, went down to Mr. Trescotte.

Dorothy went back to Hilda.

CHAPTER IV.

ONE OCCURRENCE.

HILDA told her story, but neither with ease nor connectedly. She was too much distressed, too much broken and torn by too many conflicting emotions. But with the aid of Dorothy's skillful questions the miserable details came out.

Pride, ambition, her mother's urgency, her false education, her warped nature developed under the forcing processes of the hothouse of her peculiar training, not love, had induced her to marry Waldemar. Then there was the awakening, the realization, the recovery from that intoxication which the artificial stimulus of modern high life induces, dulling the senses while it brightens the wits of its votaries. In the reaction which followed the prolonged social temulency, the real nature of the woman began to have sway. She began to see, with a vision that was clear, not blurred, who Hermann Waldemar was and what he was. Under the veneer of a gentleman he was brutish; under the gloss the fine world had put upon him his grain was coarse. A gambler and a sensualist, his tastes were low and his pleasures dictated by them. In three weeks Hilda had received the education before

denied her. She had learned that marriage, though sanctioned by the Church, was, unhallowed by love, a bondage, a mockery, a disgrace. She had read love in novels, but, under the careful tuition of her mother, she had believed it to be, like the book, fiction. To love was a figment of poetic fancy; to marry, that was practical and meant a rich husband, a fine house, a life of luxurious elegance. She had been, like the fillies of the racing stables, carefully trained to run, and when brought on to the course did run in the direction she was headed, for that was what she had been taught to do. But after three weeks, as by a flash, she had appreciated the truth of the existence of love by the curious process of realizing its absence from her own alliance. In the moment of her awakening it was revealed to her what it all meant—this compulsory companionship with a man with whom she had no community of taste or interest, from which was absent that magical glamour of love, which covers defects, makes blemishes perfections, minimizes weaknesses, and maximizes excellencies. Her stunted mind and sensibilities had in a moment sprung into normal development by the irradiation of an idea.

She had arrived at this condition of mind, when in Germany two things occurred which powerfully influenced her. They were stopping on the sea-coast and a yacht race was exciting her set. A grandee had made up a party for his yacht, of which Hilda was to be one, to witness the race. After there was to be an excursion to last three days—all

under irreproachable chaperonage. Waldemar was to sail on one of the contesting yachts, since he was an inveterate yachtsman at home. This arrangement would separate Hilda and Waldemar for three nights and four days, as the yacht on which she was would not arrive until the afternoon of the fourth day. Under unusually propitious winds, however, the yacht ran into its anchorage on the morning of the fourth day. Hilda, uncomfortable and bored, leaving her maid to look after her things, went ashore immediately upon rival and before breakfast.


Waldemar was large in a small way. Though their stay at the seashore was to be brief, he had rented a house. Entering this house, Hilda was admitted by the hall porter, who stared at her curiously, and whispered something to her in German, which she did not understand. As she ascended the stairs he shook his head in despair. To Hilda's wonder the door by which she entered the room used by her as her *boudoir*, from the hall, was locked on the inside. She tried another door, one leading into a small cross hall, from which entrance could be had both to her own bedroom and to Waldemar's apartments. This was unlocked. This bedroom was, apparently, as she had left it four days before. Condemning the negligence of the servants, she passed to the next room. Disorder, to which she was unaccustomed, reigned here. Empty champagne bottles, cigar and cigarette ends were upon the tables, and on a large tray on the floor the

remains of a feast. Astounded, Hilda halted on the threshold. Then advancing, a large sofa, her delight and comfort, came into the line of her vision.

On it lay a woman, scantily clad, asleep.

Hilda was stupefied. Slowly she went to the sofa. She stretched forth a hand to touch the recumbent figure, to see if it were real. But she withheld her hand and gazed, fascinated. Through her amazement stole a sense of the wonderful fleshly beauty of the woman asleep. Hilda continued to gaze stupefied.

An arm worthy Canova's study was flung over the head of the sofa, an arm perfectly modeled, and through its white skin the blue veins could be traced. On this arm rested a head covered with crisp auburn curls—auburn in which there was a glint of gold; a strong white neck, with alluring creases, rose from broad, white, dimpled shoulders, covered with a skin soft like satin and its sheen, with a hinting suggestion of pink; the chest and bust protected, not concealed, by the single garment, rose and fell with the deep and regular inhalations of the profound sleeper. Hilda's eyes followed the bold curves of the relaxed body, rising massively over the hips, and rested on the limb escaped from its covering, gracefully caught on the edge of the sofa—a limb so perfect in its proportions as to appear to be the work of a sculptor rather than that of nature. A more sumptuous revelation of beauty Hilda, quickly responsive to all beauty, had never seen. As she gazed her stupefac-



tion passed away. Her first thought was that a servant maid, basely taking advantage of her absence, had occupied her apartments. But the fine texture and costly lace of the garment did not belong to a servant maid. Hilda scanned the features of the sleeping woman. Beautiful as they were, they were devoid of soul and uninformed by intellect. Ah! They were familiar. She looked again and drew back in disgust.

The woman was La Hoyle, her husband's mistress, the divinity of the multi-colored lights. The woman who, for hire, exposed her charms before the public!

Rumor had connected Hilda's husband's name with that of La Hoyle, but she had refused to believe it. Now, however, she knew Rumor was truthful. This animal, not half so refined as one of his horses, was what pleased Waldemar. Disgust was followed by anger. It was not the anger of outraged love; she had no love for him to be outraged; but the anger of a woman whose pride was hurt—who thought of the ridicule and contempt of her inferiors—of the delight and laughter of her equals; anger that the man she called husband should have invaded her apartments with such a thing—that her own private domain should have been so contaminated.

With head very erect she left the room, descending the stairs to the entrance hall, where she summoned the servants. All of them had been out of the way on her arrival, for it was yet early morning. None of them save the hall porter, and perhaps Wal-

demar's man, was aware of the presence of La Hoyle. She ordered one servant to procure her breakfast, another to announce her arrival to Mr. Waldemar, and yet another to prepare a suite of rooms for her occupancy in another part of the house, forbidding all to enter the rooms she had just left.

Waldemar, who was in his bath, received the announcement of his wife's arrival with alarm. It was awkward. He awoke La Hoyle hurriedly and hid her in his own apartments, and hastened in bathrobe and slippers to detain his wife until the room could be restored to a semblance of order. He would have embraced Hilda in his nervousness, but she put him aside impatiently. She was calm but contemptuous. She made no reference to what she had seen. He asked when she had arrived; she told him, and of the incidents of her trip. She was almost gay in her recital. But it was the gayety of hysteria.

Waldemar, convinced that his wife had discovered nothing, yet wondering at her manner, returned when he thought it safe. As he ascended the stairs he planned to get La Hoyle out of the house unobserved, and he cursed his own weakness that had made him yield to the wild and imperious caprice of La Hoyle to be entertained in his house in his wife's absence and to her arrogant insistence to occupy his wife's quarters. Waldemar was ruled by La Hoyle. Subdued by her charms, he was enslaved by fear of her temper.

Hilda, behind the closed doors of her new apartments, sought relief in isolation in which she might bitterly deride the fortune that had chained her to such a man, and pray despairingly for opportunity of escape.

CHAPTER V.

THE OTHER.

SHORTLY after the return of the Waldemars to Berlin there was a ball at one of the foreign embassies. Hilda attended. She was yet in that condition of mind that made her believe that the discovery she had made was known of the world and that she was looked upon with contempt. At this ball Hilda met Lord Buttontrave, attached to the English embassy, distinguished, fascinating, accomplished, and, as the world said, destined to a high career in diplomacy. His admiration for Hilda was manifest at their first meeting. Hilda was no less attracted by him. Thereafter they met frequently. The young nobleman's admiration developed into a passion. And Hilda awoke to the fact that love did exist, and that she was capable of entertaining it deeply and passionately. With its growth for Lord Buttontrave there was increase of contempt for Waldemar. That her husband should have brought La Hoyle with him on his wedding journey seemed to Hilda to justify her in the feeling she entertained for Buttontrave. And yet everything was in thought Lord Buttontrave had whispered in her ear nothing

more serious than a compliment. The contrast of the two men did more wooing for Buttontrave than he did for himself. One was a man, the other an apology. She was not compromised by the attentions of the nobleman. Pride had guarded her against that. There was to be sure a little gossip, but *La Belle Americaine*, as she was called, was cold, it was said, and no harm came of it. Once after returning from a ball, at which Buttontrave had danced so frequently with her as to cause an unusual comment, Waldemar spoke of it in remonstrance.

"Do not fear I will not respect myself," she had replied coldly. "Before you give me advice, show me that you give as much respect to me and yourself as I do to myself."

As he had spent the whole day with La Hoyle, he did not care to continue the conversation, and he left her with the uncomfortable fear that she had come to have knowledge of the mistress.

Though Hilda and Buttontrave continued to meet, the same reticence which had characterized their intercourse from the first was maintained. Yet neither was without knowledge of the state of the heart of the other. The vocabulary of love is mute, but none the less intelligible. Neither knew how it would end, nor perhaps in this, the springtime of their love, cared. But when the time came to return to America both were distressed and unhappy. The night before her departure, on parting from her, he had whispered, "I will follow," but she was not

comforted. On the steamer's deck, a few moments before sailing, a respectable-looking man, who had been hovering about her, taking advantage of the temporary absence of Waldemar, dropped into her hand a small packet not larger than an English walnut, touched his hat respectfully, and disappeared over the side of the steamer. Instinctively concealing the packet, she had examined it in private. It was a ring, so fashioned that the colors of the jewels made a "forget-me-not." There was neither word nor symbol to indicate from whence it had come, but Hilda knew it was a message from Buttontrave. From that moment she wore it, not on her finger, but next her heart. But she never expected to see Buttontrave again. She was saddened and despairing. That was the meaning of her listlessness and indifference to all things upon her return home.

Once back in New York all semblance of attention upon the part of Waldemar passed away. Hilda's disgust and contempt for her husband increased, and she was left to brood over what might have been had she not been hurried by her mother into that hateful marriage.

Not many weeks had passed before Lord Buttontrave, having thrown over his post, appeared in New York. Rumor said he had come to secure an American heiress, and the matron mothers were all agog. Cards and invitations poured in upon him, all of which were accepted, for it was through these entertainments he could meet Hilda. This time he put no restraint upon himself. He whispered words of

love into her ears, and she listened with the eagerness of a starved soul. So, when finally proposing to throw to the winds, for her sake and love, the ambitions of a career he had cherished, he had offered flight as their destiny, she had accepted. But at the very moment of its consummation she had recoiled, and in a panic escaped to Dorothy.

"Does your husband know of your flight?" asked Dorothy, when there was no more to be told.

"No."

"But he has learned of it by this time?"

Hilda laughed bitterly.

"He rarely comes in until the night is nearly over, and then he goes straight to his own room. He will know to-morrow afternoon."

"He will know on finding you gone?"

"I left a note to be handed him by Ellen."

Ellen was an old Courtenay servant, transferred to Hilda.

Dorothy thought a brief moment, and then said:

"Stay where you are. Do not leave this room until I return."

Hastening to Trescotte and Mrs. Trevor-Allen, Dorothy told them so much as was necessary to make them understand the situation.

"Lord Buttontrave must leave the country," said Trescotte promptly. "I will attend to that. Then that letter to Waldemar—that must be recovered. When these things are done it will be time enough to consider the next step."

"My carriage is at the door, Dorothy," said Mrs.

Trevor-Allen. "I will drive you to Hilda's house. Come."

Trescotte, approving this, hurriedly departed. Calling Downs, Dorothy said to him:

"Mrs. Waldemar is in my room. She is not well—in fact, very ill. Watch her faithfully during my absence, and if she tries to leave the house, detain her, even if you have to use force."

The two women hurried away. Both were silent, busy with their own thoughts. Each would have been astonished could she have read the other's mind. Dorothy was thinking how Lou Graham (her friend) and her sister Hilda had been sacrificed upon the altar of wealth and society, and how differently each had borne the test, and her affection, as did her admiration, increased for the brave little woman beside her, who had so uncomplainingly borne her crown of sorrow. And Mrs. Trevor-Allen was thinking how true the woman sitting beside her had been to her love and her ideals, and how nobly she had borne the world's misunderstanding of her, and her affection for Dorothy, as did her admiration, increased.

As they were nearing the house, Dorothy suddenly threw her arms about Mrs. Trevor-Allen and whispered:

"Lou, dear, when Mr. Magrane comes to you to-morrow night, ask him to take no steps for the present about Mrs. Adams' boy."

"You heard our talk to-night?"

"Yes."

"Why do you ask that?"

"I want to think it all out."

They had reached Waldemar's house, and the carriage had stopped as Mrs. Trevor-Allen gave her consent.

It did not require many minutes to persuade Ellen to give up the letter sought. Dorothy was her favorite, and it was enough for Dorothy to tell her that Hilda was ill at her home, and wished the letter. The two women returned, pleased that by the recovery of the letter a scandal had been averted.

Dorothy found her sister sitting as she had left her, dry-eyed and staring into vacancy. She handed the letter to Hilda, telling her to destroy it. Hilda took it, stared at it dumbly, then realizing what it was, gave herself up to a paroxysm of anger.

"Why do you interfere in my affairs?" she cried "I will go to him! He waits for me now! The man I——"

She broke down and, throwing herself upon Dorothy's neck, burst into tears.

"The best thing that could have happened to her," commented the practical Mrs. Trevor-Allen. "It will save her from brain fever or something. Now put her to bed and I'll go home."

In the meantime, Trescotte had hurried to the opera house. The hour was late and the distance far. He feared the opera would be over before he could get downtown. Calling a hack at the corner, he promised double fare to be driven rapidly. As


he turned from Seventh Avenue into Fortieth Street he had the satisfaction of seeing the blazing lights of the house and the long line of carriages. Signaling the driver to stop, he dismissed him, and sauntering up the street on the side opposite to the opera house, peered into every carriage. He had not met Lord Buttontrave, but he was certain he would know him. Find him he must, if he followed him all night. The *Champagne* sailed at six the next morning and Buttontrave must sail with it. He reached Broadway without finding his man. On the corner he stopped to think. If, he thought, it was arranged that in joining him it was to appear as if Hilda was leaving the opera, then Buttontrave would be near the main entrance where he could watch for her coming. Acting upon this thought he crossed the street and walked rapidly down to that entrance. Near the covered way he saw a coach about which there was an air of mystery. The curtains were drawn over the side windows. He approached it. The man he was looking for was within it.

"My lord," he said as he opened the door without ado, "permit me to present myself. I am Mr. Trescotte."

The nobleman was congealed haughtiness.

"Your intrusion is unpardonably impertinent," he replied.

"I think not," returned Trescotte steadily, with a tone of severity that made the other stare hard into the eyes of him who had so unceremoniously thrust



himself into the coach. "My name perhaps conveys nothing to you. My wife—Mrs. Trescotte—is a sister of Mrs. Waldemar."

The face of the Englishman was inscrutable. Upon the word Waldemar he was on guard at every point. He bowed haughtily.

"Mrs. Waldemar is at my house," continued Trescotte, "quite ill, under Mrs. Trescotte's care. She will be unable to leave the house to-night, and will not see anyone."

The nobleman regretted to hear it.

"Permit me to suggest," Trescotte went on in his cold, severe, and yet perfectly courteous tone, "that you would do well to take possession of your state-room on the *Champagne* to-night. It sails at six, and it is unpleasant to rise so early."

The nobleman was of the opinion that Mr. Trescotte was too solicitous as to his comfort.

"It is much the easier way," replied Trescotte. "It will save much annoyance. As yet Mr. Waldemar knows nothing that should disturb him. Believe me, my lord, we don't fight duels here. But public sentiment justifies the outraged husband in taking a summary justice into his own hands."

"Please tell cabby to drive to the Brevoort House," said the nobleman. "Good-night."

Trescotte did as he was requested, closed the door of the coach, bade Lord Buttontrave good-night and went home.

CHAPTER VI.

HILDA RETURNS HOME.

HILDA was saved. For what? A joyless existence with a man whom she loathed and despised from the bottom of her bitter soul.

The next step was the subject of an earnest discussion between Trescotte and Dorothy the morning. Trescotte was urgent in his opinion Hilda should return to her own home as soon as possible, and thus avoid the possibility of a scandalous talk. Whatever arrangements Hilda was to make for her future life, in his judgment, it was better she be initiated from her home than elsewhere. And Dorothy agreed with him.

After a night's sleep Hilda was in a better frame of mind to look upon her situation. As I have on occasion to remark, I do not pretend to understand the inconsistencies and contradictions of the female heart. And so without attempted explanation I merely state that Hilda awoke at once glad and regretful. She was glad to find herself under the protecting Trescotte wing, safe from the fascinations of adorable English noblemen, and regretful that the particular adorable English nobleman who was fascinating to her, was disappointed in his enter-

and had fled America without even an effort to see her again. Indeed, now that the danger and the possibility of yielding was passed, she longed passionately for the opportunity of yielding. Since Lord Buttontrave was secure on the deck of an ocean steamer, she vowed to herself if he were to open the door of her room and say "Come!" she would rise up and follow him with gratitude. Indeed, as all the joy and happiness which, in her dreams during the days preceding the day of action, she had promised herself with Lord Buttontrave receded from her view and became impossible, she yearned for them, at the very moment she felt strong in the security of the knowledge that he was on that steamer deck. And she visited Trescotte, who had sent the fascinating young nobleman away, with no displeasure.

To the contemplation of Waldemar she turned with positive hatred. She was angry with Dorothy because she had not let the letter go to its destination to forever and for all time sever the bonds of the hateful tie. It was difficult for Trescotte to make her see that, if she contemplated divorce, such a course would have placed a weapon in the hand of Waldemar, while under the recovery and destruction of the letter he was practically defenseless.

But to urge her, or to encourage Hilda in the obtainment of a divorce was not the purpose of Trescotte; nor was it of Dorothy. Indeed both of them shrank from the idea with a sincerity quite amusing to a cynical old foggy like myself. Here

were these two people, still smarting under stings and whose backs were yet raw with the lashes which had been laid on by society, employing with Hilda the very same arguments that had been used against them. Mrs. Courtenay could not have placed the awful frowns of society and the terrible consequences of the aversion of its countenance before her sister, any more forcibly than did dear little Dorothy. Her arguments were to me the strongest assurance that Dorothy was secure in the faith that the life she was living was just and moral.

Hilda, whose ability to follow the argument was somewhat obstructed by considerations of Dorothy's own doubtful relations, and yet unable to combat them, reluctantly yielded. When she left her home the previous night it was with the belief that the hateful bonds were severed for all time. Though she had failed in courage to carry out her purpose, the thought of returning was distressing. As a concession to society and the sacred Courtenay family only would she go back, and if she did, it must be with the distinct understanding that if not an apparent, a virtual separation from Waldemar should result, with a separate allowance, and no intercourse with her husband except in public and for the sake of propriety. Only on these conditions would she return. Trescotte engaged to undertake this enterprise, and so Hilda went back to her home, and Waldemar arose at noon unaware that his wife had not spent the night under his roof.

Trescotte's mission was not agreeable. A little thought showed him that his chances for success would be better were he to deal with the elder Waldemar. The younger man was pugnacious and would be inclined to ask upon what authority he, Trescotte, interfered in his marital affairs, and to suggest the advisability of straightening out his own troubles before engaging in an effort to correct those of other people, but he had given his word to Hilda, and there was no one else to act for her. So he sought the elder Waldemar in his bank parlor.

There was an ominous frown and a dark look in his eyes as Trescotte revealed the turpitude of Waldemar the younger. No one could be more insolent or more audaciously and courteously haughty than the elder Waldemar.

"Do you not think," said the old banker, with that accent which made his words so impressive, "that this is a very singular mission for *you* to be employed upon? One, my dear Mr. Trescotte, ought not to hurl stones if in a glass house he lives."

"Mr. Waldemar," replied Mr. Trescotte, with an air quite as haughty and a tone quite as arrogant, "a man should not even refer to a matter of which he is wholly ignorant. I shall not affect not to understand that you are referring to that gossip which slanderous tongues distinguished me with. You are wholly ignorant as to my relations, and being so, any reference you may make to them is cowardly."

"Sir!"

"I mean precisely what I say. If this is to end



our interview, then I will carry the commission I have received to a lawyer. I had hoped for the sake of two families—the Waldemars and the Courtenays—that my mission would be received with courtesy, and thus trouble and scandal would be avoided. You shall choose.”

This was summary proceeding, and Trescotte rose, hat in hand, and assumed an attitude of waiting.

The elder Waldemar was as politic as he was arrogant. He smiled as he said:

“You are a diplomat, sir. Resume your seat and let me know what the young Mrs. Waldemar demands. But first let me ask if there is not a possibility that her charges against her husband may be disputed.”

“An hour devoted to inquiry, Mr. Waldemar, would assure you of the relations existing between your son and the woman known as La Hoyle. With the facts in my possession and the proof which I will submit, you can assure yourself that the relation has existed so long that it antedates your son’s marriage by a year; that when Hermann went to Germany on his wedding journey La Hoyle followed him, and during the whole of that trip he did not lose sight of her.”

The old banker was shocked.

“Enough!” he cried; “if this be true there is no defense for him. That was bad; the wedding journey, that was bad.”

The inference seemed to be that in the mind of

the old gentleman, if it were not for the episode of the wedding journey, the rest might be forgiven.

"If Hermann gives up the girl," he said, "gives assurances of reform, Hilda will pardon him?"

"I think not?"

"And indeed, why?"

"Her pride has been outraged. With your experience in life, sir, you will understand the potency of that. Do not misunderstand her position. Her desire is a release by divorce. Mrs. Trescotte and myself have persuaded her from that, but no power will alter her present determination. If it is not granted she will leave his roof."

"Why, then," asked Mr. Waldemar, "has Mrs. Waldemar the younger waited more than a year after her discovery to make her charges?"

It was not the purpose of Trescotte to tell the old gentleman the incidents which had led up to Hilda's determination. His memory and ready wit served him.

"La Hoyle had a seat on Hermann's drag at the races yesterday, and Hermann held the whip himself. She was flaunted, permit me to say, in the faces of Mrs. Waldemar's friends and associates—the culmination of a long series of insults and humiliations."

The old banker thought for a while and then said:

"It is a pity that Mrs. Waldemar the younger could not be persuaded that the better way would be to accept Hermann's assurances of reform. But you say that is impossible. Well, it shall have to be, then, as she will dictate. I will examine, and in

a day or two will communicate with you as her representative. I presume it is the best way out of a very distressing business."

Thus the interview ended, and Trescotte, as he went away, was certain that the old banker thought that the end of the arrangement proposed would be the reconciliation of the two young people, and in that belief was inclined to yield.

CHAPTER VII.

DOROTHY'S SACRAMENTS.

WHILE Trescotte was submitting the Waldemar inglement to the old banker, Dorothy was sitting beside the cradle of her firstborn. Two subjects possessed her mind. Crooning a lullaby, soft and low, as she gently swung the cradle of her new joy and hope, she was lost in deep meditation.

Linda's hopeless position, her unhappiness, her slow escape from shame and disgrace was one of the subjects. Could Mrs. Deekman and Mrs. Beesmy have read the thoughts of Dorothy at this time, I greatly fear they would have been confirmed in the justice of the crusade they had organized against this young mother. Her thoughts were bitingly against society,—the society she knew—its ideals, its motives, its morals, and its educational influences. Dead had she become to the code upheld by her superexcellent women as the two who had led her to the ostracism of herself, that she actually pronounced that society as false, wicked, even without common sense, which is much worse, as we all know, than being false or wicked. When she surveyed the field and saw that Waldemar was no better nor no worse than others of his rank, in the life

he led, restrained a little less, perhaps, by a sense of propriety and good taste, she felt that in looking down into the depths of Hilda's misery she saw glimpses of the life of half the households of her acquaintances. When she thought of Hilda, alone in that great house, in the flush of health, young and beautiful, yet with not a single ray of hope to lift her up, she thought she was looking into the hearts of half the women with whom, in her girlhood, she had romped and played. With that peculiar perversity I have noted more than once in the course this veracious history, she actually said to herself: "In a world where common sense and good morals reign, Hilda's position with Lord Buttontrave would be considered no worse than her position with Waldemar, in which union only wealth and high position were considered."

Of course she was very bitter, and it must be admitted she was very sorry for her sister. She had acquiesced in the proposed virtual separation of Hilda from Waldemar, not as a settlement of her troubles, but as a mitigation of the horrors of Hilda's life. And this woman, bred in the most exclusive circles of that society, in the most conservative manner, educated to believe that position within it was the highest aim of life, was led by her thoughts to pronounce, as the summation of her observations and experience, this *dictum*: "Its teachings lead women to forget their self-respect and virtue; Hilda should have a divorce." The justice of my fear, that Mesdames Deekman and

Beestonmy would have been shocked and saddened, is, I think, made very clear.

That she should contrast Hilda's position and her own was natural. The little cloud that had rested upon her own happiness put forward its claims for consideration—that cloud which Mrs. Trevor-Allen had said was of her own making—the jealousy she had permitted to take sway and erect that intangible something between herself and her husband. Under the guidance of this thought she traveled gently and by degrees to the second subject of her meditations.


She admitted that in entertaining the unworthy thought she had justified Mrs. Trevor-Allen's upbraiding. Even when she tried to excuse herself in the love she bore Trescotte and her desire to be everything to him, she was compelled to confess that littleness and selfishness had been at the bottom of her weakness. Bending over the babe sleeping so peacefully and trying to trace on that infantile face the lineaments of its father, and contrasting the love, tenderness, and nobility of that father with the vice, brutality, and ignominy of Hilda's husband, she vowed to dismiss all vestige of such weakness and be worthy herself and the man, the love of whom had rescued her from her sister's fate. In this vow was the third sacrament of her life—a sacrament as holy as any at churchly altar, or under priestly hands—a sacrament, the influences of which were dignifying and evolutionary.

Perhaps it was the association of ideas that brought to her mind Mrs. Adams and her passionate

desire to be restored to her husband. Perhaps in the desire, which found place in these self-communings, there was emulation of Mrs. Trevor-Allen. I do not believe it, rather I think it was the direct outcome of the resolves she had made over the pure face of the babe she was crooning to. Her heart was full of pity for the unfortunate boy whose mere existence was the cause of so much trouble, and who stood in the way of a reconciliation of Mr. and Mrs. Adams.

So deep and absorbing were her meditations on this point that she forgot to croon and to rock. With a hand resting on the cradle and a far-away look in her eyes, she sat motionless a long time. By and by there came upon her face an expression that was saintlike and holy. The babe, missing the croon and the motion, turned uneasily, and the young mother, lifting it from its cradle, and cuddling it in her arms, covered its face with her own and breathed into its ears another vow. And that was the fourth sacrament of her life—a sacrament which in its influence upon her was ennobling and revolutionary.

There was a step in the hall and a light rap at the door. Her husband, returning from his mission, was seeking her. With her babe in her arms she admitted him herself, and, at the threshold, met him with a kiss so tender and so clinging that he wondered at it. Tears were in her eyes; he lifted her face to him. She smiled. April sunshine through a shower.



"Why," he asked, "what is all this?"

"You are so good to me. And I have made a vow. I mean to be worthy of you."

"Worthy of me?" he repeated, in a tone which said she was already worthy a dozen such as he.

"Yes. I will tell you—when you have told me what Mr. Waldemar says—something I have to propose."

CHAPTER VIII.

DOROTHY'S PROPOSAL.

THE following evening, at early candle light, as they used to cail it, before the fashion of hurrying through this jostling world had brought about a minute and prompt observance of hours and division of hours, Tracey Harte was entertaining the widow Trevor-Allen with all the current gossip of the day. He was her only purveyor now that she was withdrawn from society for a period of decorous mourning.

When he had unloaded his *quantum* (and she had been unusually unattentive and had actually yawned twice during his most exciting morsel) she disturbed his self-satisfied serenity with this remark—

"Tracey, you must stop calling on me."

"Oh, Mrs. Trevor-Allen!"

"Yes, dear boy, you must. When I was a wife it was all very well, but now that I am a widow, and must regard propriety, people will talk. One can stand a little scandal when one is a wife, but talk, especially if one is without a husband, oh, my!"

And the vivacious little woman turned up her dainty hands and her lovely eyes in horrified protest.

"Oh, I say, that is rough!" stammered the luckless

youth. "You know I won't know what to do if I haven't got you to bully me."

"It's sad, I know," rejoined the lively widow. "Some sacrifice to the god Propriety is demanded. And, in view of all I have done for you in the way of completing your education, it is the littlest thing you can do for me—make a sacrifice."

"You can bully me as much as you want," said Tracey dolorously. "I rather like it, but don't laugh at me."

Before Mrs. Trevor-Allen could reply a servant handed her the card of Mr. Magrane.


"Perhaps that's the reason why I am dismissed," said Tracey, much crestfallen, and not without a pang of jealousy, as the servant disappeared.

"Now, Tracey, don't be silly," laughed the lady. "You are not in love with me; you couldn't be, if you tried. And you haven't even tried to try. You simply like me. You're a very nice youth. But never be jealous of a woman's lawyer."

"Why?"

"Because she has to show up her unpleasant and mercenary side to him, and she's such a fool about business that she knows she is disgusting her lawyer all the time. No woman falls in love with a man, unless she first is pleased with herself for having pleased the man. There is a small bit of truth for you, by which you ought to profit, if you mean to push your career as a heartbreaker. Go now, dear boy, this is a business engagement."

Tracey, believing himself badly treated, gave



place to Mr. Magrane and went to his club an hour earlier than usual, where, to relieve his feelings, he swore at the waiters.

"I have been thinking over that proposal of yours to adopt the boy of Mrs. Adams," said the lawyer, introducing the subject which was the excuse of his visit—"thinking it over very carefully."

"Oh, that," replied Mrs. Trevor-Allen indifferently. "Mrs. Trescotte wants me to take no steps for the present."

"You have talked to her about it?" asked Mr. Magrane in astonishment.

"She overheard our conversation last night and afterward asked me to do nothing about it for a while."

"Did she tell you why she wanted delay?"

"No."

"It is singular, since a reconciliation between Mr. and Mrs. Adams would help her own situation so much."

"I do not understand that she opposes it," said the lady, "only that she wants it deferred for the present."

"Well, we may talk about it all events," said the lawyer. "I'm quite enamored of the idea."

"Then you see no objections?"

"None, except those the mother may make, and those you say may be overcome."

"By convincing her that the sacrifice she is asked to make is for the good of the boy."

The lawyer did not reply, but was busy with his

thoughts for a while. Then he remarked, as if his words were a reflection upon what he had been thinking, rather than an answer to her last speech :

"Your sex is incomprehensible."

"To your sex?" laughed the lady. "Only because you look too deeply for our motives."

"Perhaps. Our sex acts from reason; yours from impulse."

"No, not impulse, intuition—conclusions without the slow processes of thought, and with as much purpose and result as from your reason."

"More." He thought a moment longer and said kindly: "You are a very good woman, Mrs. Trevor-Allen. To serve people who have won your sympathy you would burden yourself with the care of this child."

The lady laughed merrily.

"How little you know, after all, of our sex. I'm pure selfishness. This act was prompted by selfishness. Bored with the emptiness of my life, I want something to fill it up."

"You are deriding yourself," said the lawyer, not pleased.

"I am not," said the lady, pleased to see him displeased. "Into the life of every woman, not utterly abandoned to some fault or vice, there comes at some period a desire to have something to love, care for, to worry about, to suffer for. It has come to me."

The lawyer turned upon her a grave look, searching yet kindly; into his eyes crept a light of mingled

humor and admiration. Withal there was such a quizzical look that the lady was abashed.

Then he quoted:

" Those graceful acts,
Those thousand decencies, that daily flow
From all her words and actions."

For once that ready tongue was without reply. She blushed, becoming angry because she did, and blushed again. She was relieved by the entrance of a servant who brought the cards of Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte. Hailing their coming as a deliverance, she instructed that they be brought to the apartment in which they were sitting.

"We knew we should find you here, Mr. Magrane," said Dorothy, after the exchange of salutations, "and it was because of it that we came. Oh, I know that's not nice, Lou, to you—that is, that it doesn't seem so, but we have something to propose, and we wanted you two to hear it together and advise us."

"You hurt and flatter my pride in a breath," laughed the widow, pleased to have the Trescotts there to stop that lawyer's disconcerting looks. "What is the important proposition?"

"Harry will tell you," replied Dorothy, on whose cheeks were signs of the excitement she was laboring under. "It is very important and serious."

"It is something Mrs. Trescotte proposes." Trescotte as a matter of principle always spoke of his wife as Mrs. Trescotte before others, no matter how close to her they were. "She overheard your con-

versation last night and the proposal to take the child for adoption by you, Mrs. Trevor-Allen, and it seems it set her to thinking."

"That and some other things not necessary to mention here," broke in Dorothy.

"She heard your arguments too, especially that which set forth the position of the lad if he is allowed to grow up under the present relations and conditions. She has been thinking to-day, it seems, and much to my amazement, and I may say not a little to my perplexity, this afternoon proposed that we, she and I, should adopt the boy."

"Very disinterested in Mrs. Trescotte, I'm sure," said Mr. Magrane, a little surprised, and, sniffing a conflict with Mrs. Trevor-Allen, prepared to side with her.

"Not at all!" cried out the widow, owing him one for having disconcerted her. "It is only her duty, and what I knew she would do when she came to her own sweet self."

"But you wanted the child?" said the lawyer, discomposed by the prompt rejection of his proffer of an alliance.

"I don't. But if I did, Dorothy is the proper person to take it," she said, and then a little maliciously, "we'll give you some time to reason upon the truth of this remark; I have arrived at it by intuition."

"I want to say," Trescotte went on gravely, "that this conclusion was arrived at without consulting me. It is a way Mrs. Trescotte has of thinking out

troublesome things by herself and giving me the results of her cogitations."

Trescotte looked at his wife with a tender smile, for his mind went back to that summer day in Saratoga, two years before, when their destiny was decided. The lawyer knew what he meant. Trescotte continued:

"In the forming of her opinion I had nothing whatever to do. What credit there is in the nobility of the thought is hers."

"Never mind that, Harry, keep to the story," laughed his wife, a little nervously.

"And the thought *is* noble," ignoring her interruption. "But I am much disturbed and perplexed by it, seeing many objections. My relation to the matter is singular and perplexing. My duties are conflicting, and I have not arrived at any conclusion."

"It is time you did," put in Mrs. Trevor-Allen. "And that you conclude to take the boy if Mrs. Adams will let you."

"Another intuition, Mrs. Trevor-Allen?" asked the lawyer.

"Another intuition, Mr. Magrane," laughed the lady. "Hurry up with the reasoning part. It is one of the penalties we have to pay, Dorothy," she said, turning to Mrs. Trescotte, who had taken a seat beside her, "for the sweet consolation of men's society. They will reason, when we know what to do at once."

"What are the objections that have arisen in your mind?" asked the lawyer, addressing Trescotte,

"Well, the first is that, owing to the peculiar relation I bear to the boy, it might be charged that I had forced Mrs. Trescotte to an acquiescence."

"Doubtless," said the lawyer.

"Pure selfishness," said Mrs. Trevor-Allen. "Your pride rebels at the thought."

Trescotte laughed.

"It is true," he said, "but I will dismiss my pride."

"Objection number one disposed of!" cried Mrs. Trevor-Allen.

"But what will its effect be on Mrs. Trescotte?"

"Objection number two," said the widow.

"Won't such an act raise up a great deal of talk and set tongues wagging again?"

"They must wag, then," said Dorothy. "They have wagged industriously for a year, and still we live and are happy."

"A nine day's wonder. The christening of the baby you have at home will cause as much," remarked the widow.

"I am inclined to believe," said the lawyer, "that while gossip and speculation will follow the act, that the utmost malice can do will be to insinuate that Mrs. Trescotte had been forced to comply. But since it is not so, it need not be counted here. Indeed, I'm also inclined to think that the great majority will approve and sympathize with the act, as one virtuous and noble, and for which Mrs. Trescotte should be applauded."

"Oh, don't discuss me so much," cried Dorothy, abashed. "Talk about the business we came on."

"They will talk—the world, I mean—anyway," put in the little widow very decidedly. "If you don't take the child, people will talk; and if you do, they will. Why, if I had taken the child and adopted it, as I proposed, they would have whispered that it was my own; that I had had it conveniently hidden until I could become a widow."

"Why, Lou!" cried the horrified Dorothy.

"They would. Oh, I know this charming world of ours. Well, objection number two is disposed of. Now for objection number three."

Trescotte's face suddenly sobered. He began impressively:

"Do not let anyone here misapprehend my words in this statement. But I am sure no one here will charge me with failing to give to my wife the deepest love and the highest admiration for her sterling character and true nature. When I say it now, I say it before friends, who, when the clouds over us were the darkest, and when there was danger and such in association with us, held out to us the hand of warm friendship, and I know that they will accept my words as being as sincere as they are in fact."

Mr. Magrane and Mrs. Trevor-Allen bowed in response, not caring to trust to voice, for they were both affected by the deep feeling vibrating in Trescotte's tones.

Dorothy, with heightened color and dimmed eyes, asked gently: "Harry, is it necessary to say this?"

"I think it is, in my own right," replied Tréscotte

gravely, and turning to the others: "The question with me must always be the happiness of Mrs. Trescotte. She has sacrificed much to continue in companionship with me, and to secure her happiness is only that gratitude which I should show her. The human heart is a mystery. The will does not always control it. On the contrary often the will is subordinate. The human heart has laws of its own, and those laws, while often working in harmony with, are not builded in, the logic of the mind. Now with this preface I must ask, Will Mrs. Trescotte be happy in the realization of this proposition? I have answered the question of my duty to the boy, by putting first, and before it, my duty to Mrs. Trescotte. Now, may not the presence of the child, daily and hourly, be a vastly different thing in the realization, than when in anticipation it is viewed through the medium of exalted imagination and high purpose? To have that child enter our house and destroy our domestic peace, as it already has that of Mr. and Mrs. Adams, would be to work great harm, without accomplishing good to anybody."

He waited for an answer. There was silence. Mrs. Trevor-Allen looked anxiously at Dorothy and she was sitting with head bent. At length the lawyer said: "But one person can answer your question."

"And I am that person," said Dorothy, lifting her head and looking at Trescotte very steadily, though her voice was low and somewhat shaken. "There

is reproach in what my husband has said. He does not mean it, nor is it in his words. It is in what I have cast out, by the help of this dear friend,"—she put out her hand and took that of Mrs. Trevor-Allen,—“who has shown me what a good woman can do under circumstances so heartrending as to make by comparison my troubles pitifully small. I can answer out of a heart and mind that have struggled and won: Nothing will give me more joy than to see, standing at my husband's knee, his son, when my babe is in his arms.”

“Objection number three is disposed of!” cried the widow with a little gasp, and looking very straight away from Mr. Magrane, who had bent earnest eyes upon her when Dorothy made that veiled reference to her troubles.

“Yes,” said the lawyer, “Mrs. Trescotte has answered. Judging from a disinterested standpoint, and a worldly one, I should say the case of Mr. and Mrs. Adams is not analogous. What other objections have you?”

“Now, purely legal,” said Trescotte. “Can I in law be prevented from joining Mrs. Trescotte in adopting the lad?”

“No. A man may adopt his own children, if he desires.”

“Objection number four disposed of!” laughed the widow.

“Finally,” said Trescotte, “and I think this is difficult: What effect upon us and our position will the adoption have? Under your advice we have

assumed that a marriage—a common law marriage—did exist between Mr. and Mrs. Adams. Would that assumption be changed or complicated?”

“I see your point,” said the lawyer. “I can answer now. I would go about this adoption, if that be your determination, precisely as you are doing now—assuming the validity of that marriage. I think it would strengthen the position you have already taken.”

“Objection number five disposed of, and the whole subject disposed of!” cried the widow as she sprang from her seat. “You see you have reasoned, you men, and finally have gotten to where we two women were in the beginning. Unless, Mr. Trescotte, you have more foolish objections to raise.”

This Trescotte laughingly disclaimed, and the conversation took the direction as to the best means to be employed in accomplishing Dorothy's desires. The end was that Mr. Magrane was authorized to open, in his own time and discretion, negotiations with Mrs. Adams.

CHAPTER IX.

A BLOW FOR FREEDOM.


SEVERAL days passed before Trescotte, in his character as the representative of Hilda, received a message from the elder Waldemar. Then it was to the effect that having had an interview with his son, Mr. Waldemar had received pledges of reform, and the old gentleman urged that, perhaps, Mrs. Waldemar the younger would be content, and resume relations. Trescotte had replied that while he believed that Mrs. Waldemar would not agree to a composition of the trouble, except on the terms she had commissioned him to present, nevertheless, he would lay the proposition before her. Hilda was obdurate. A day or two more passed, and Mr. Waldemar, the elder, desired a personal interview with Hilda. The request was granted, though reluctantly, and only upon the condition that Trescotte should be present. Though the elder Waldemar pleaded the cause of his son well, Hilda refused to consider, or to moderate her demand, insisting that she had indubitable proof that Hermann, notwithstanding his father's assertions, had not reformed. Forced to retire, Mr. Waldemar apparently yielded to Hilda's demands. But days elapsed and

nothing definite was done. Under one pretext or another, delay was made by the Waldemars, father and son, until Trescotte was satisfied, though he did not say so to Hilda, that they were engaged in some intrigue. They were, but not of so deep a character as Trescotte feared. The old banker believed that Hilda could be tired out with the delay, and would finally do something which could be tortured into condonation of Hermann's offenses.

Three weeks passed in this game of delay, and then a young man, a clerk of a well-known banking house in the lower part of the city, called at the Waldemar house, asking to see Mrs. Waldemar, and refusing to communicate his business to anyone but her. When Hilda came to him he placed a packet in her hand and went away. Had the banking people whom this young clerk represented known the ends they were made to serve, they probably would have been outraged; but they didn't. They had been requested by their London correspondent to see that the packet reached the lady's hands and hers alone. The packet was a letter from Lord Buttontrave.

That letter was fateful.

Gently upbraiding her for having failed him, yet excusing her upon some suppositional discovery of their plans, he renewed the assurances of his love, declared life without her companionship held out no inducements for him, and generally expressed himself as strong men do when they are desperately in love, that is to say, foolishly and insanely.



The young matron read the letter a dozen times, glorying in it. Then she did what few women have the fortitude to do with a love letter. When its words were burned into her memory she threw it into the fire and watched it turn into ashes. She thought a long time by the fire. At length, arising with the air of one who had reached conclusions and formed a plan, she sat herself at her writing table and wrote a reply. She told him the truth of her failure to meet him; she expressed the assurances of her undying love in terms not less ardent than his own; she told him that she should put his affection to the test; that she was engaged upon a plan, the successful issue of which would leave her free to gratify his love and her own; she demanded that he should not write her for two months, but pledged herself to write by every mail; if, at the expiration of that time his love for her held, he was to come to her in New York; she charged him to destroy her letters as received, telling him that any accidental discovery of them might defeat her plan.

Sealing her letter, she dressed, called her carriage, and driving to the office of Mr. Magrane, she asked him to begin proceedings for a divorce from her husband. To say that the lawyer was astonished would probably be to say too much, for lawyers in their experiences are not easily astonished, but he certainly did marvel that the most brilliant match of the last season should have ended so sadly and so quickly. The proofs she submitted shocked his manhood and he accepted the retainer.

Hilda went home, and gathering her personal effects, went to Dorothy, asking a second time to be taken in. This time she did not leave a letter for Hermann.

The Trescotts were embarrassed. Their own delicate position made them feel that Hilda, for her own sake as well as theirs, should have gone anywhere but to them; that in the publicity of the divorce suit their own marital affairs would be dragged out into the sunlight; that they would be charged with having aided and abetted, even influenced, Hilda to the course she was pursuing. They were quite certain that Mrs. Courtenay, when she came to know of the divorce suit, would visit her anger and disappointment on them. Yet it never occurred to them to deny Hilda shelter, nor did they let her know their embarrassment.

They were quite right, as it turned out, in their belief that Mrs. Courtenay would be angry with them. But Hilda averted the threatened storm as soon as its mutterings were heard, and in doing so showed a strength and a decision that demonstrated how great was the revolution that had been worked in her in the few months of her wedded life.

"Mother," she said, when Mrs. Courtenay, first learning of Hilda's suit as she did from the elder Waldemar, sought her to have the proceedings withdrawn forthwith, and had begun angry objurgations of Trescotte and Dorothy, who were both present; "mother, the less you have to say of this the better. When you blame Henry and Dorothy for anything

I have done, you are wholly wrong. I left Walde-
mar nearly a month ago; it was due to their persua-
sions and influence that I returned to his house.
That I had left him a second time and begun a
divorce suit, they only knew when I came to them
for shelter."

"But why, child, did you not come to me, your
mother, for advice?" asked the distressed Mrs.
Courtenay, thinking that if Hilda had, how easily
she could have prevented the dreadful suit.

Hilda's reply was crushing, and oh, the bitterness,
the cruelty of it!

"Because I do not trust you. Having forced me,
young, ignorant, and innocent into this disgraceful
marriage to suit your own ends, your opinion could
have had no weight with me. I did not go to you,
because you have failed as a mother to me; because
you have used me merely as an implement in the
game you were playing; because I was merely a
stone on which to build increased social power; be-
cause your ambition prevents you from judging
between morality and immorality; because you
would have sacrificed me, my heart, my soul, my
life, to have saved your own pride; I went where
someone could judge between right and wrong.
You cannot. I came to Henry and Dorothy. They
are leading holy lives. Your influence over me is
gone. You have done me a wrong; I cannot and
will not forgive you. If this is unchristianlike,
recollect I am what you have made me. If my life
is ruined, then you are the cause of the ruin. You

may weep, but your tears are not of contrition—they are of disappointed pride.”

Hilda, concluding her diatribe, left the room. So intense and virulent had she been that Dorothy fairly shuddered, while Trescotte was filled with pity for the woman so humiliated; and Mrs. Courtenay, after seeking sympathy from those she had come to denounce, went away murmuring something about a thankless child and a serpent's tooth.

Hilda's suit was well on its way toward the day appointed for the taking of testimony before Adams arrived. He had come with a well-defined plan which should place him in a position of less embarrassment than he was then laboring under. But on learning of the proposition of the Trescotts to adopt the boy, he was willing to defer action until the outcome of the movement could be ascertained. Indeed, he expressed not only a willingness, but an ardent desire to be reconciled to Mrs. Adams if success followed the effort, and thereby the stumbling-block was removed.

Mr. Magrane seized the few days intervening before the taking of testimony in Hilda's divorce suit, and journeyed to Buffalo. As he expected, Elsie received the proposition with alarm and distress. Yet he set forth all the arguments, dwelling upon the doubtful position of the lad were the present conditions to continue, or Adams to obtain the divorce or declaration of non-marriage he was then preparing to seek. Too shrewd to offer the hope of

reconciliation as a barter, nevertheless he deftly insinuated the idea, and left the mother to become accustomed to the thought.

The next day he again sought her, and again went over the field of argument, and this time he had the satisfaction of finding that she contemplated the possibility of the IF, for she asked questions, and raised objections to be answered, not as if they were conclusive, as she had done the previous day. Finally Mr. Magrane said:

"Mrs. Adams, you ought not to decide this question, either way, without the advice of someone who will look at it disinterestedly, yet from your standpoint, and whom you can trust. Do you not know some honorable lawyer to whom you can go?"

Mrs. Adams caught at the idea, and mentioned a member of the bar of that city, whose name Mr. Magrane recognized as of high repute, and who has since risen to great distinction. Arranging to meet Mrs. Adams at that lawyer's office the following day, he left her.

When they met the next afternoon, Magrane saw that Elsie still held the matter in abeyance. To Mr. Dayton, for such was the lawyer's name Elsie had selected to advise her, he said:

"If you will permit me, I will state the case from the beginning, and end with the proposition to submit which to Mrs. Adams is the reason of my visit to Buffalo. If I go astray in any particular, Mrs. Adams will correct me. I shall make no argument, nor give color to my story. The parties I represent

would not justify me in seeking to exert an undue influence upon this lady. If she accepts their proposal, they desire she should do so fully believing it to be the best thing she could do, and that all interests were thus best served. They do not wish to conceal the fact that in an acceptance of the proposal is the solution of many matters which perplex them and Mrs. Adams as well. With this exordium I address myself to the statement, asking your patience, for it is intricate and complicated."

Mr. Dayton thought there was little need of asking his patience. Never in his experience had he listened to a story more dramatic, involving more novel situations, and he was charmed by Mr. Magrane's methods of statement, which left no point untouched in its proper place or bearing. When Mr. Magrane had concluded, Mr. Dayton said:

"I also am inclined to take the view that a common law marriage exists. The idea of settlement in another direction has entered my mind, but it is yet too crude to formulate. I know this ex-magistrate. He is about the city, a disreputable sort of a fellow."

Mr. Dayton drummed his fingers upon his table for a moment or two, looking through the windows to the wintry sky. Mr. Magrane waited for him. "If this idea," he continued, "were to take form, and from it should come a solution of the difficulties simpler than you now propose, and a sum of money were required to effect it, I presume such would be forthcoming."

"Any reasonable sum," promptly replied Mr. Magrane.

"Very well; you shall hear from me. In the meantime I will advise with Mrs. Adams."

Mr. Magrane returned to New York to plunge into Hilda's affairs.

CHAPTER X.

THE DECREE OF FREEDOM.

PUBLICITY, so much dreaded by all involved directly or indirectly, did not accompany the trial of the Waldemar divorce suit. The court designated a lawyer as referee to take the testimony, which was done behind closed doors. Under Mr. Magrane's skillful management there was no public mention of the reference, and society was deprived of a choice morsel.

The Waldemars were disconcerted by Hilda's vigorous movement. At the time they thought they were adroitly playing the game of delay she had forced them to a defense. And that defense, the elder Waldemar knew, was weak and made weaker by the fact that the younger Waldemar, at the very time he was making pledges of reform, had foolishly complicated himself. These facts led the Waldemars to join in the effort for secrecy in the proceedings.

The proofs of Hermann's turpitude were incontrovertible, and there was practically no defense. Consequently the taking of testimony occupied but one day and the report of the referee, promptly

made, was promptly confirmed by the court. Society, though it knew that Hilda had left her husband and was domiciled with the Trescotte's, was only made aware of divorce proceedings when the decree was entered and Hilda was freed from her bonds. As it knew nothing of the Buttontrave episode, and had heard of La Hoyle, it became the fashion to sympathize with Hilda and denounce Waldemar.

During all this time Hilda, as she had promised, had written to Buttontrave by every mail. She had told him in the series of letters what she had undertaken, and what success the effort was making; she had frankly told him that when put to the test of sacrificing her own self-respect, in flying with him, she had recoiled, for she had realized that she had been driven to the thought of so reckless an act as much by the misery of her life as by reason of her love for him; she pledged him her undying affection, and assured him that it grew as the days of their separation grew; then she became practical and formative, for she told him that his own love was going to the test; that if he, as he vowed, held it steadfast and true, he would, when she was free, seek her in honorable marriage; but if, as he applied this test, he found that his love was not strong enough for that course, it were better to forget her and his unworthy passion for her, and devote himself to the career which to win distinction in was his ambition.

Of course I am aware that this is quite the reverse

of romantic—that it smacks altogether of too much common sense and practicality. If I were writing romance, I should have Buttontrave in a carriage outside the door of the courthouse, the steam up in his yacht in the harbor, and as the decree was announced, while the Waldemars were wailing and gnashing their teeth, the nobleman should whisk Hilda off to some land of flowers, where the sun always shines, and the soft, languorous winds always blow over the blue Mediterranean Sea, where in love and luxury they should live until Hilda's retributive conscience pricking her, she should return to the bosom of her weeping family to die of consumption and a wailing orchestra; but I am writing sober history and must adhere to the facts.

So also must I record that instead of foolishly rushing to this country and interfering with the successful progress of her suit, Buttontrave replied to these letters despite Hilda's injunctions to the contrary. And in these letters his protestations of love were as ardent, and his expressions of hope of her success as fervid, as Hilda could desire. He assured her that when she sent for him he would come speedily, to weld her in a new bond of wedlock.

As soon as she was informed of the decree of the court, which was immediately, Hilda drove to the office of the cable and sent this message:

"Free. Come."

A few hours after she received his reply:

"On wings."

Which was quite pretty but nonsensical, for even

poetic license cannot convert a dirty smokestack and a thumping screw into the wings of a bird.

And of all this no one had knowledge in this country save Hilda.

But Buttontrave did not come on wings nor anything else. On the day he should have sailed the aged Duke of Somersfield, his father, after a brief illness not considered dangerous, died, and the succession to the estates and the titles delayed him, as he instantly cabled to Hilda. But he begged her to go to London, where, he urged, they might be quietly married and take up that life of joy and happiness they had promised themselves. Hilda, her expectations a little dashed, sat down to think earnestly over this proposition.

CHAPTER XI.

A SIMPLE SOLUTION.

APPARENTLY the enterprise of the adoption of the boy languished. Days wasted and weeks grew into months, and though Mr. Dayton's communications held out hopes, they meant delay. When hope was about gone, there came one day a letter from Buffalo informing them that Mrs. Adams had finally yielded, and consented to give up her boy to the care and adoption of Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte. And Mr. Dayton suggested that Trescotte and Dorothy should be in Buffalo on a certain specified day to receive the child. And further, that if Mr. Adams could be induced to be in that city, on that day, good ends would be served. The letter was particularly urgent that Mr. Magrane should on no account fail to be present, as the "short cut" had been found to be practicable. What that "short cut" was, puzzled Mr. Magrane. Being endowed with that great quality, patience, however, he dismissed the riddle until he could see Mr. Dayton.

Though Mr. Adams demurred somewhat at what he called "traveling in the dark," yet he agreed to go with the party; and Mrs. Trevor-Allen, insisting that having ridden in the front from the beginning

of the chase, she would not permit herself to be unhorsed at the end, declared that she would be in at the death, so she also accompanied them. The terms of this declaration proved to me that the lively widow had followed the anise seed bag on Long Island.

At the time specified, Dorothy and Trescotte, Mrs. Trevor-Allen and Mr. Magrane assembled at the office of Mr. Dayton—rather, one should say, series of offices, for there were many rooms, the doors between which, on this occasion at least, were closed. The party was led into an inner room, where it was greeted by Mr. Dayton warmly and with smiles. Great satisfaction was pictured on his broad face. After seating his visitors he went to his desk, and taking from it a paper called Mr. Magrane aside.

"Where is Mr. Adams?" he asked.

"At the hotel, awaiting summons."

"That is very good," said Mr. Dayton. "We will need him. Indeed I think I will send for him now."

He excused himself while he gave the necessary instructions and returned to Mr. Magrane, handing him the paper he had held in his hand. It was a certified copy of a law of the State of New York, recently passed.

"What is this?" asked Mr. Magrane.

"The short cut."

"I do not understand it," said Mr. Magrane, puzzled.

"Well," said Mr. Dayton, his face positively beam-

ing, "when you made the statement to me of this most extraordinary case, the idea occurred to me that there was a short cut to the settlement of Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte's marital troubles, doing away with the necessity of resorting to the assumption of a common law marriage. After thinking it over, I sent for this ex-magistrate, Ebert, and questioned him. The facts were as you had stated them. He was bitter against Adams. He thought Adams wanted freedom, and that having informed Adams that he never had been married he should have received payment for his information, which he never had. Working upon this feeling, I drew a bill, confirming and legalizing all of Ebert's acts as a magistrate for the seven days after his removal, and sent Ebert to Albany to secure its passage. His acts were few, but among them was the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Adams. The bill has, after the usual delay, become a law. You hold in your hand a duly certified copy of it. The marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte is therefore as valid as the rites of the church and an act of the legislature can make it, and no doubt rests upon the Adams marriage. I have paid Ebert twenty-five hundred dollars for his consent to this act and his services in its passage."

"And shall be reimbursed before I leave your office," cried the delighted Magrane, marveling at the simplicity of the solution of Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte's difficulties.

Joyfully he took the law to his clients and ex-

plained its effect, slyly remarking that organized society could correct its own defects, if one could learn its clumsy machinery. It was with difficulty that Dorothy could grasp the significance of the law, but when she did she looked with such grateful eyes upon Mr. Dayton that the bluff old lawyer was much disturbed.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Trevor-Allen in a bored tone, "what uninteresting people you have suddenly become—merely commonplace married people."

Mr. Dayton cast an indignant glance at the widow, much to the amusement of Mr. Magrane, who had come to know the ingenious expedients to which she resorted to conceal her own emotions.

"You perceive, Mrs. Trevor-Allen," he said; "that the reason of the animal man does some time serve a purpose."

"Not reason," she replied pertly, "a little superior knowledge denied the woman by the tyrant man."

But this was not the business that had brought them there, so Mr. Dayton brought them back to their mutton.

"Mrs. Adams and the child are in the adjoining room," he said. "She has consented. It is really the best thing under all the circumstances she could do. She did not yield easily, but she is firm now. I could have told you earlier than I did, but I wanted to pass this law first, and I thought it well that the little woman should first become accustomed to the thought of separation before it actually

occurred. Come, Mr. and Mrs. Trescotte, let me take you to her. It would be better," he added, turning to the others, "to let them go in alone."

He opened the door, and as it swung back Mrs. Trevor-Allen caught a glimpse of a picture that lived in her memory many days—the picture of a slight, graceful figure, a sad face sweetened with yearning, hopeless love, a child strained to the heart of that figure, a child face looking up wonderingly into those yearning eyes bent over it. A fleeting glimpse, lasting but an instant, but oh, how vivid. Often afterward, in the solemn watches of the night, that picture arose, filling her heart with pity and her eyes with tears.

Mr. Dayton remained but a moment. When he came from the room his face was strangely drawn, and he was so busy with the papers at his desk that he could not address those in his room, and when a clerk came to tell him Mr. Adams had come, he went out to meet him. By and by he came back, followed by Mr. Adams. Mr. Magrane addressed a remark to the newcomer, but Mr. Adams did not seem to know what had been said, and replied at random, much preoccupied.

Mr. Dayton went into the room where Mrs. Adams was, and then Trescotte and Dorothy came out. The boy was in Trescotte's arms, looking with wondering doubt into the face so near his own. Tears she did not seek to conceal were in Dorothy's eyes, and a pitying smile on her face. She rested a hand on Trescotte's arm as she listened to the tale

of the wonderful things Trescotte was to show the little lad, and the most wonderful pony that ever was, to be all his own, whose silver tail and harness and cart won an eager light to the dark eyes of the lad, and wooed a smile to his lip.


Dayton came again, very busy and very mysterious, and beckoned to Adams. The door closed upon them, and there was a moment or two of silence. Then a soft, glad cry stole through the door, and all was silence again. The lad prattled about the silver tail and the long whip, eager to go.

"Oh," cried Mrs. Trevor-Allen to Mr. Magrane, "is there anything in this world more pathetically cruel than the eagerness of a child to run from the clinging love of its mother to the promised rainbow."

Mr. Dayton appeared for the fourth or fifth time, his face working nervously, and there was so much of it to work, again busy with the papers on his desk. Then he came to the group.

"There is a little woman in there," pointing to the door that hid her, as he found his handkerchief and blew a sonorous blast, "who has experienced in a single hour the deepest sorrow a mother can know, the loss of her child, and the highest joy a wife may know, the proof of the deep love of the man who has won hers. Go now, good people. Do not wring her heart with fresh sorrow by letting her see you carry her child away."

As they prepared to go, Mrs. Trevor-Allen said to Mr. Magrane:



"I shall marry again."

"Whom?"

"Mr. Dayton."

"Then I'll remain to murder him."

But Magrane didn't, only to complete a few details and draw a check, but long enough to see Mr. and Mrs. Adams depart—Adams with his wife's arm drawn tenderly within his own, and a glad light of happy content on his face, and Elsie, with what he had never seen on human face before—mingled joy and grief, love and sorrow.

When the Trescotts arrived at home, Hilda rejoiced with them over the happy settlement of the troubles that had vexed them so long, and astonished them by announcing her early departure for Europe, smiling curiously at their wonder.

What most amazed the people involved in this tale was the rapidity with which the essential fact of these happenings—the regularity of Dorothy's marriage—got abroad.

"What a horrible thing, you know!" cried Society. "Here have people been saying something was very wrong about the Trescotte marriage, when it turns out there was nothing wrong, at all. It is positively awful that people should talk so. And the Trescotts were so reserved and high-minded that they would not stoop to deny the slander. How people can do such things passes all understanding. I must call on dear Mrs. Trescotte and show that at least I am above such littleness."

And the silver salver at the door filled up rapidly

with cards; and there were nods and bows, and gracious smiles in public places, and invitations to teas and dinners. And finally came the apotheosis. The Trescotts found their names high up on the list of the patron Patriarchs, as Dorothy, with a merry laugh, showed Mr. Magrane one evening, giving that gentleman an opportunity to indulge his habit of quotation:

"Applause

Waits on success, the fickle multitude,
Like the light straw that floats along the stream,
Glide with the current still, and follow fortune."

He sauntered away to the smoking room, very much at home in this house, to the happiness of which he had so much contributed.

"This is 'an earthly world.' Downs, give me a cigar."

"Yes, sir."

"'When to do harm is often laudable;' and a glass of Madeira, Downs."

"Yes, sir."


"'To do good, sometimes accounted dangerous folly.'"

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, you agree with Shakspeare? You're a philosopher, Downs."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Magrane supplied such of this tale as was unknown to me one bright moonlight evening on



the deck of an ocean steamer, about a year after the close of its events, prompted from time to time by his wife. From old habit, I addressed her as Mrs. Trevor-Allen. She corrected me, laughingly saying that though she had increased her state she had diminished her name. They were going abroad for a prolonged stay, and proposed to spend some time with the Duchess of Somersfield. Did I recollect the duchess? Hilda Courtenay, you know—she who was divorced from young Waldemar? Oh-h, yes! Indeed! A duchess, hey!

THE END.



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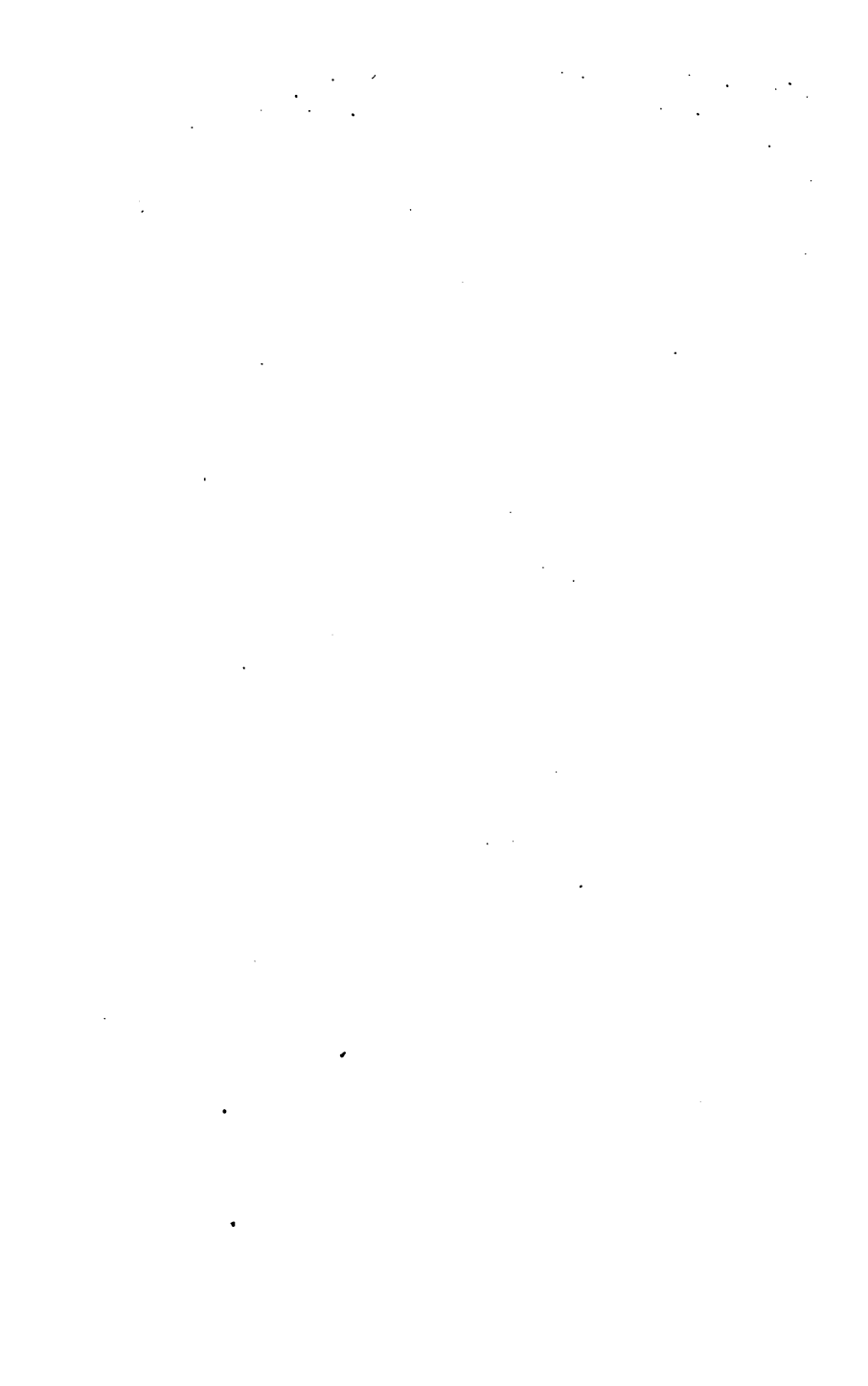
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